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Guide-Boards for Teachers

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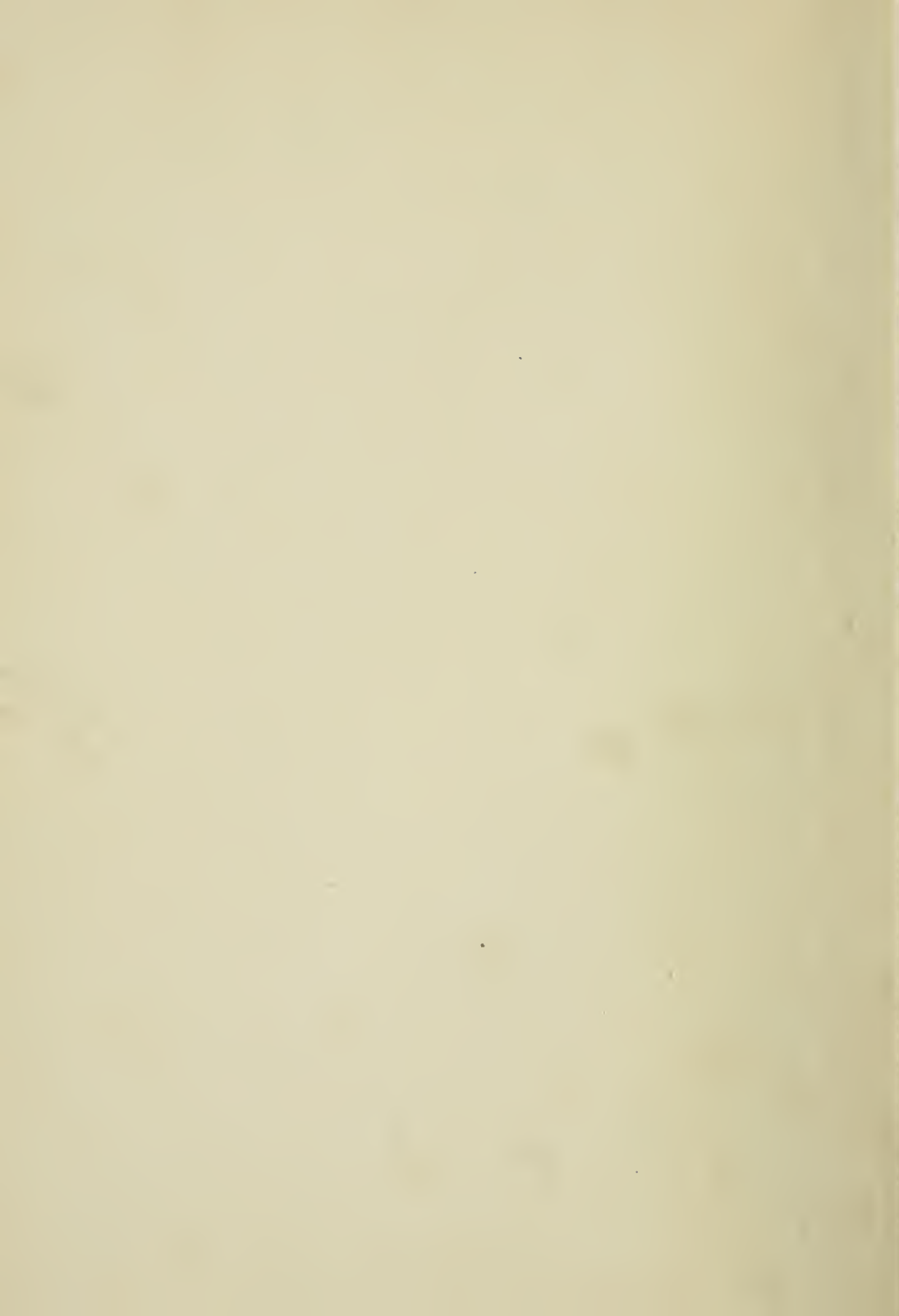
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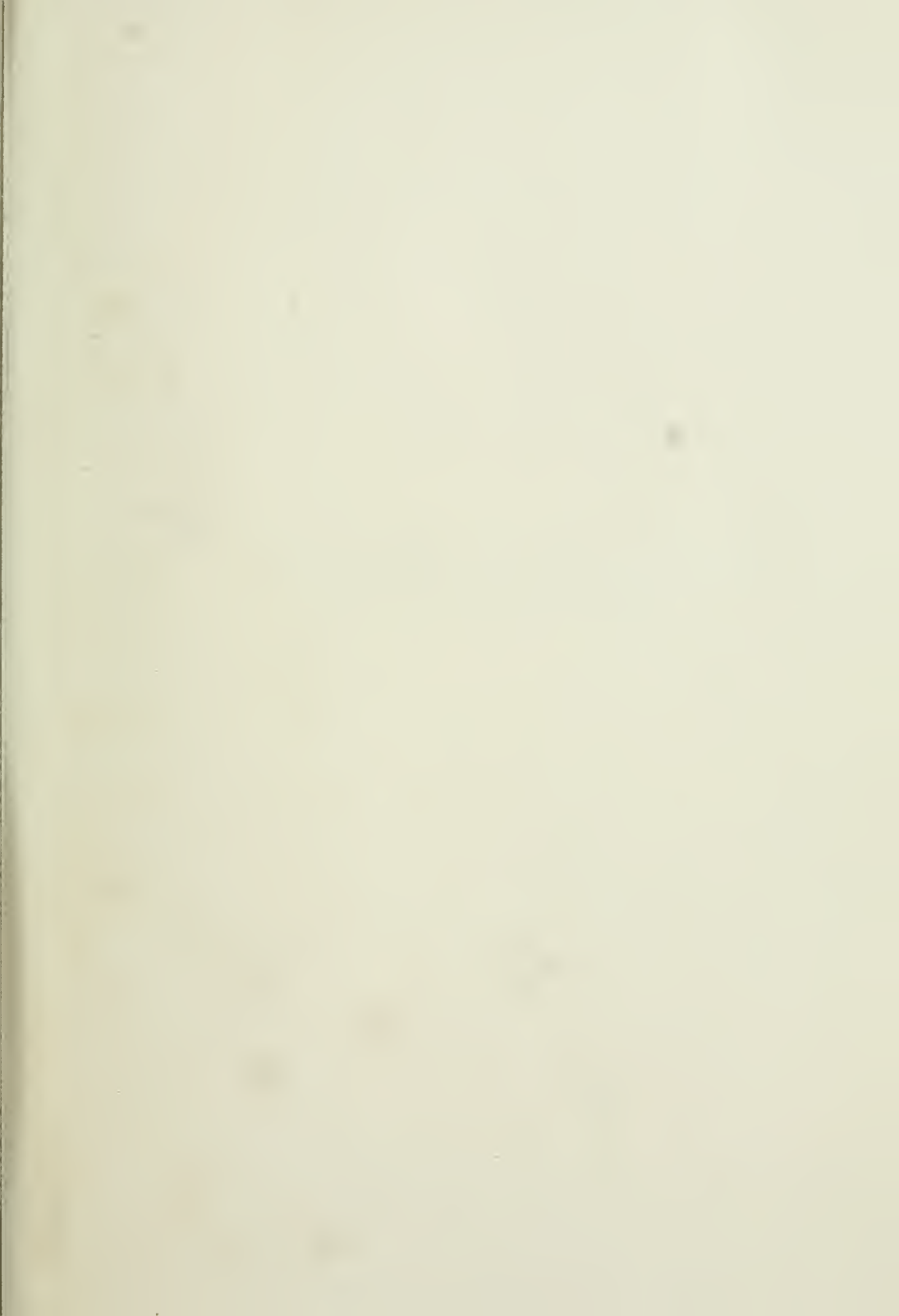
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W. E. Hazzard

130 Crawford St.
Toronto

Oct. 1902







GUIDE-BOARDS FOR TEACHERS IN
THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL



GUIDE-BOARDS FOR
TEACHERS

IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL

BY

W. H. HALL

Illustrated by Elisabeth F. Bonsall

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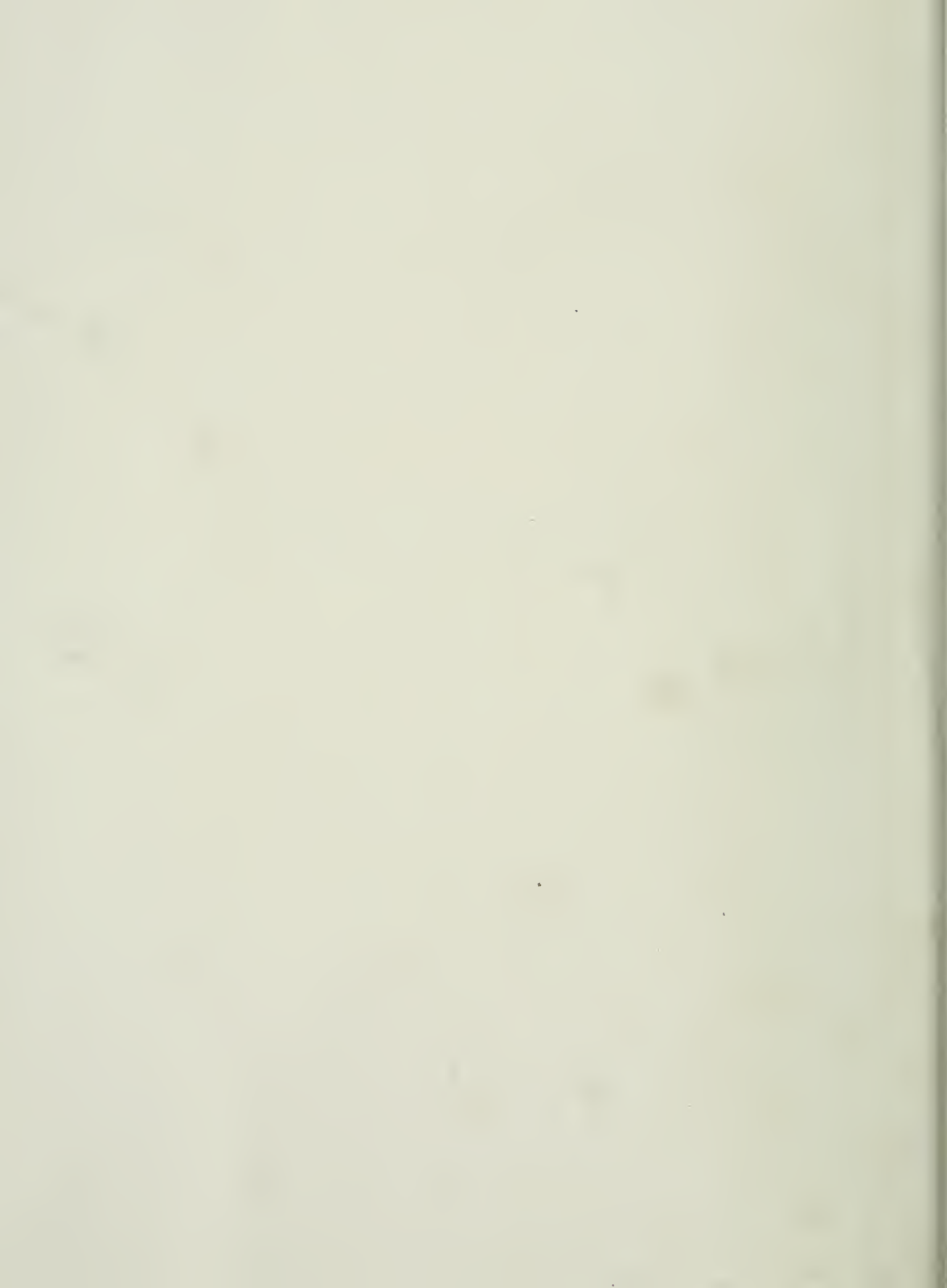
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AT THE CROSS-ROADS





At The Cross Roads

THE laws of Connecticut, and presumably of some other states, require the selectmen of the towns to erect and maintain guide-boards at all suitable and necessary places along the highways, for the convenience and guidance of travelers. In some towns this law is carefully complied with, and the guide-boards are found in places where the traveler most desires information. In other towns the guide-boards are not found, or, if found, are not in a position or condition to be of special use for accurate information and guidance.

A considerable experience with guide-boards

in traveling has led the writer to the thought that they may be considered as in some measure typical of Sunday-school teachers and their work.

Just as the guide-board stands, or should stand, at the parting of the ways or at points of difficulty and doubt, for the direction of the traveler, so the Sunday-school teacher stands, or should stand, at the parting of the ways or in times of doubt and difficulty, in the life of the scholar, to give wise counsel and to afford guidance and help.

Happy is the Sunday-school scholar who finds in his or her teacher, at all times, such a counselor and helper. Happy is the teacher who truly appreciates the responsibilities, and at the same time the precious privileges, of his or her position in this respect.

Doubtless the great majority of our Sunday-school teachers realize the importance of the work and the grandeur of their opportunities, and are endeavoring quietly, earnestly, and in a spirit of faithfulness and devotion, to fulfil their

*Teacher as a
Guide Board*

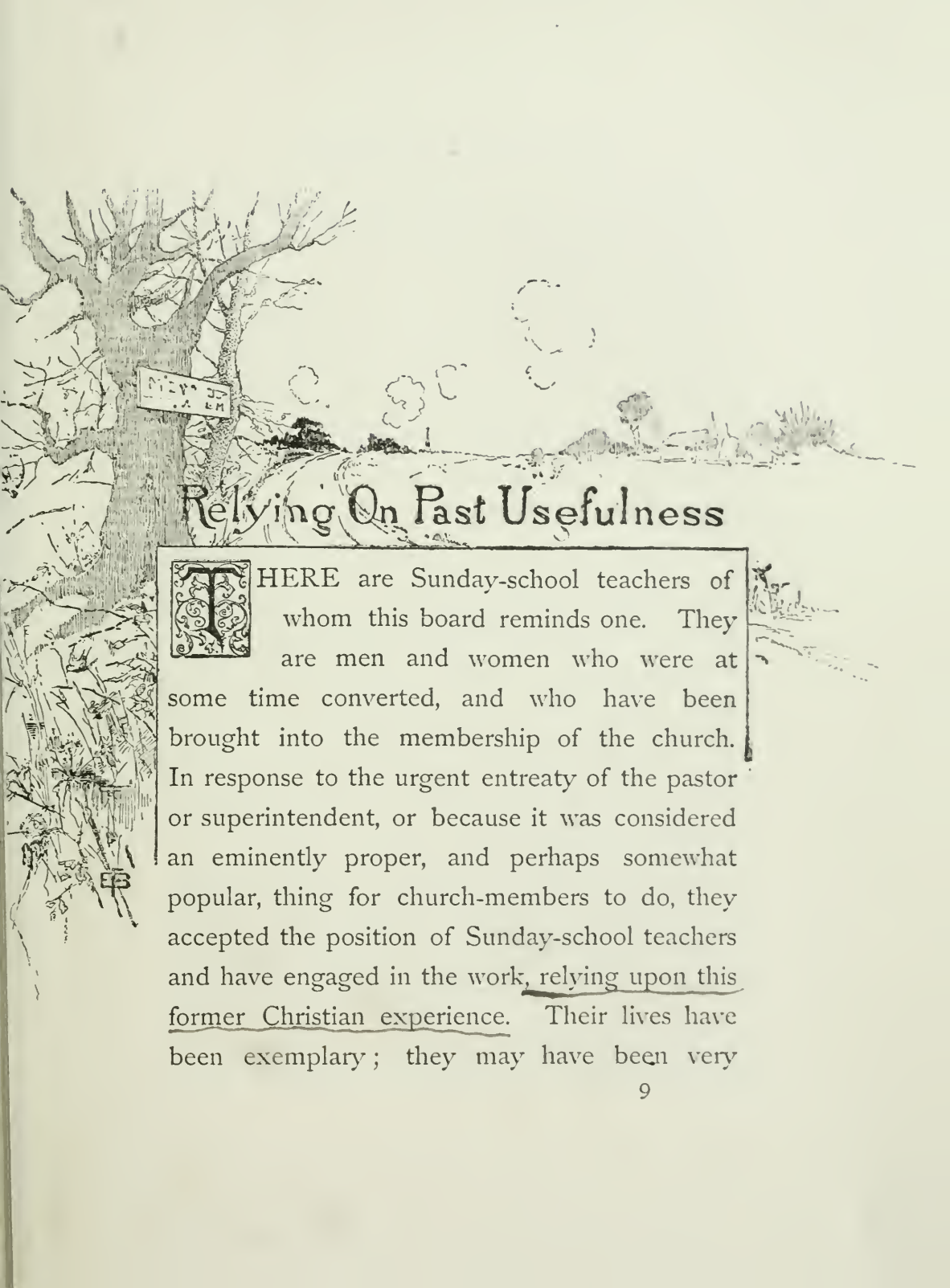
high calling. All honor and praise to these noble and earnest workers! We cannot too highly appreciate their service, or too often give expression to our gratitude for them and their unceasing labors.

The guide-board which stands at the head of this chapter may properly represent all such laborers in the Sunday-school cause. It stands erect at the very point where it may be most serviceable, and its directions are clear and intelligible. No traveler passing that way will be disappointed, or deprived of the information to which he is entitled. But, as has been already suggested, all guide-boards are not like this one; and is it not equally true that all teachers are not like those just described?

It is not the desire of the writer to criticise Sunday-school teachers, but rather by means of simple and familiar illustrations to point out truths which are by no means new, yet which need to be enforced again and again; and to show how, in different ways, Sunday-school teachers may fail to appreciate and improve

the blessed opportunities that are set before them, and also how they may guard against such failure. This is done in the hope that stimulus and encouragement may be afforded that shall lead to better work and grander results in the future.

RELYING ON PAST USEFULNESS



Relying On Past Usefulness

THERE are Sunday-school teachers of whom this board reminds one. They are men and women who were at some time converted, and who have been brought into the membership of the church. In response to the urgent entreaty of the pastor or superintendent, or because it was considered an eminently proper, and perhaps somewhat popular, thing for church-members to do, they accepted the position of Sunday-school teachers and have engaged in the work, relying upon this former Christian experience. Their lives have been exemplary; they may have been very

regular in attendance, and, in the formal discharge of the ordinary duties of a Sunday-school teacher, fairly faithful.

But just as the usefulness of this guide-board is greatly impaired because care has not been taken by those in authority to renew the lettering, so their work lacks force and earnestness, and, as a consequence, the results have been meager and unsatisfactory.

The class under the care of such a teacher receives no inspiration or positive help. Indeed, it is somewhat remarkable if the scholars remain long in the class. They drop out, one after another; and, if the class is maintained, it is in all probability because the superintendent replenishes it by the introduction of new members from time to time.

In some cases, however, the class is composed of Christian people who stand by the teacher from a sense of duty, or in obedience to long-continued and confirmed habits. The writer once knew such a class, taught by a good deacon. He did not study his lesson, or mani-

fest any special personal interest in his scholars. He lived and labored on the strength of earlier experiences, and made no effort to infuse the work with fresh power and interest. He had a small class. The members of it were faithful in attendance, coming Sunday after Sunday purely from a sense of duty, or from force of habit, or possibly because they desired to cast their influence on the right side by their attendance at Sunday-school. But the class was a dull and dry place because the teacher was not a progressive Christian. He did not realize the importance of a fresh experience of God's presence and power day by day, of renewed communion with him, and of earnest daily study of the Word.

Of course such teachers do not, as a rule, attend teachers'-meetings or conventions, or seek in any way to attain to higher and better things. They are not Bible students. They have read the Bible, and perhaps studied it, in a general way. They are somewhat familiar with certain portions of the Word, and if the Sunday-school

lessons relate to the life of Joseph, or Moses, or are taken from the Twenty-third Psalm, or the Sermon on the Mount, they have no concern but what they can teach the lesson without any special study of it. They can indeed go through the exercises in the class, with such lessons, without making any serious blunder (or any lasting impression); but when the lessons take them into the minor prophets, or some other less familiar and more obscure passages, then they are apt to make blundering work of it. Yet in one way or another, possibly by asking the questions in the quarterly, and letting the scholars read the answers, they manage to get through.

It will not do for Sunday-school teachers to depend on former experiences. The active and efficient teacher is renewed in spirit and life from day to day. Conversion and admission to the church are only the starting point. Growth, development, fitness for service, come by daily communion, constant study of the Word, and fresh experiences of the presence and power of God in the heart and life.

Let us not, however, confuse the teacher relying upon an old experience with an old teacher, such as the guide-board shown here may, in a measure, represent.

Some of the oldest teachers in years are really among the youngest in heart and life. As the guide-board, in its general appearance, shows the effects of the exposure of many years, but in its lettering is still distinct and clear, so these aged teachers, with bent forms, wrinkled faces, and silvered locks, clearly mani-

fest the spiritual freshness and vigor which spring from the eternal source, the living Christ in the heart. Such teachers are a constant benediction and blessing. Happy is the Sunday-school that has even one of them among the ranks of its workers !

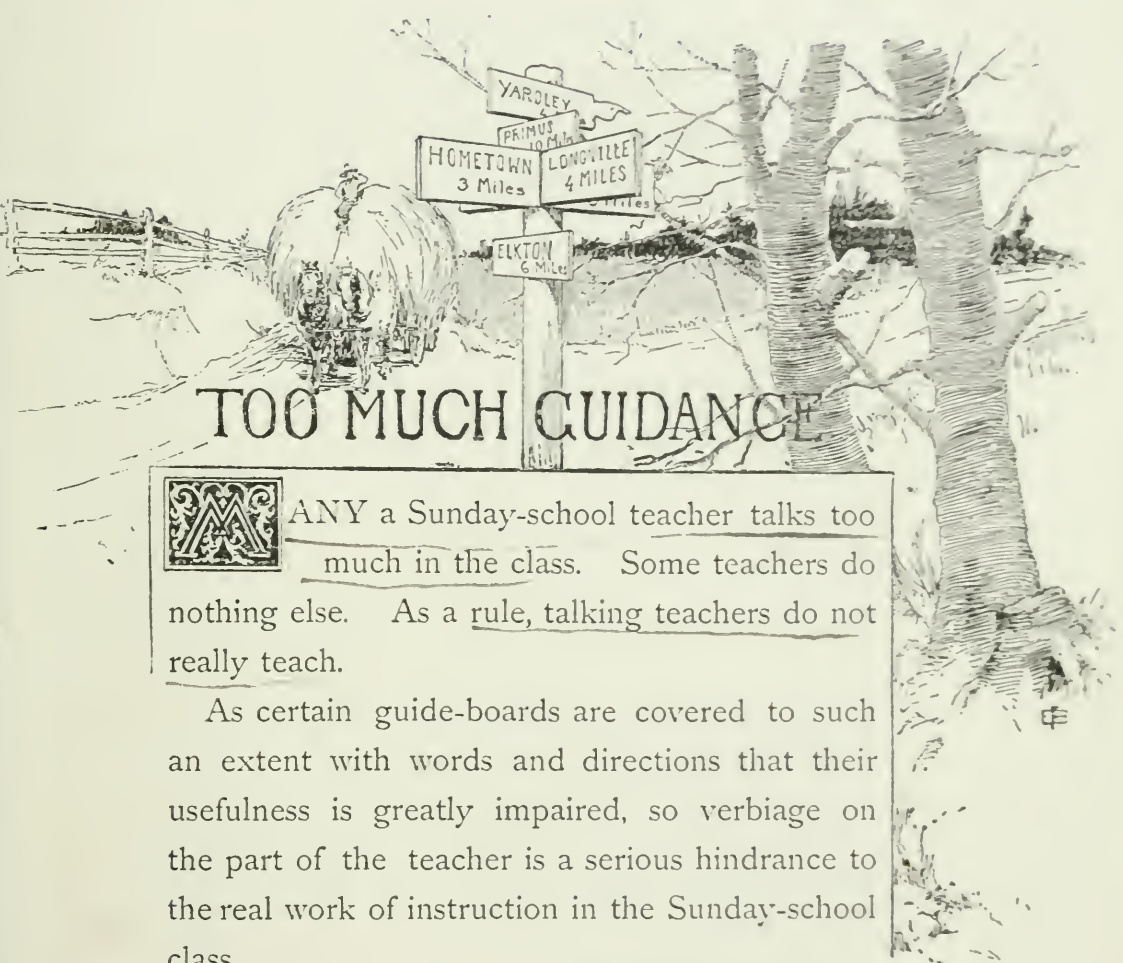
Some time ago the writer met, in one of the



Sunday-schools of Connecticut, a teacher of this sort. For more than threescore years she had been the leader of the primary class in that school. Every class in the school, from the oldest adult classes down, had been under her instruction. And the influence of her devoted life, the inspiration of her living faith and youthful spirit, had been a wonderful power in the history of that school.

It is an inspiration to meet such teachers. Their counsels and experiences are helpful, and their presence and manifestation of interest in the work are inspiring. All honor to the true and faithful teachers of many years! They have found the secret of eternal youth. They are noble examples for those of fewer years, who have been characterized as teachers depending on old experiences. Contrasting the two classes, one is reminded of the forceful saying of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "It is better to be eighty years young than forty years old."

TOO MUCH GUIDANCE



TOO MUCH GUIDANCE



ANY a Sunday-school teacher talks too much in the class. Some teachers do nothing else. As a rule, talking teachers do not really teach.

As certain guide-boards are covered to such an extent with words and directions that their usefulness is greatly impaired, so verbiage on the part of the teacher is a serious hindrance to the real work of instruction in the Sunday-school class.

Some teachers talk because they are fond of talking. Their scholars have discovered this, and know very well how to get the teacher to talk, if they desire to get rid of answering ques-

tions, and to have an easy time during the half-hour devoted to lesson study. One teacher, who had traveled in Palestine, was very fond of telling of what he saw and heard while in that land. His scholars, who were bright, mischievous boys, naturally improved every opportunity afforded by any reference in the lesson to places, persons, or events connected with Palestine, and so would get him to talk upon his favorite theme. They had a good time, and he had a good time ; and he seemed to be utterly unconscious of the fact that a splendid opportunity for instruction had been virtually squandered.

There are other teachers who do not like to talk, and who know that it is not the best plan, yet who fall into the habit because they find some difficulty in attempting to pursue a different course.

A gentleman, speaking of his Sunday-school class, lamented the fact that they seemed to retain but little knowledge of the lessons studied. When questioned as to his method of teaching, he confessed that he was in the habit of talking

to the class. He knew that this was not the best method. He had tried the plan of asking questions, but the scholars did not seem inclined to answer. He had endeavored to encourage them to ask questions, but without success. Finally, after a few attempts, he had given up trying, and had fallen into the habit of talking to the class, endeavoring to present the subject-matter of the lessons in an interesting way, and to bring out the practical truths as forcibly as possible.

Perhaps he was too easily discouraged. We cannot expect our scholars to enter at once, heartily and fully, into new methods. Perhaps the members of his class did not know just how to answer his questions, or to frame questions of their own, and so, rather than expose their ignorance, they kept silence. If that teacher had persevered in his efforts, he might have found some method which would have gradually prepared the way for the accomplishment of his purpose.

Sometimes it is a good plan to give to the

members of the class points in the lesson to look up and report upon. In this way interest is awakened, and the way is opened for better work. The saying that "it is better to set ten men at work than to do the work of ten men," applies to Sunday-school teachers in relation to their classes.

But let no Sunday-school teacher imagine that it is easy "to set ten men at work." It is often harder to do that than to do the work of ten. There must be the exercise of great care in the selection of the best methods, persevering and untiring efforts in the line of those methods, and, if the teacher is inclined to be a talker, the constant use of the prayer of the Psalmist, "Keep thou the door of my lips."

There is great force in the words of Dr. H. Clay Trumbull in his book on "Teaching and Teachers," with reference to the matter of talking. He says, "It is important that every teacher should understand, at the first and at the last, that telling a thing is not in itself teaching a thing ; and that, if he is a teacher at all, it

will be through the use of some other method than mere talking."

Another, and probably the greatest, reason why we have so many talking teachers, is because there is not a proper appreciation of the Sunday-school as a school. We think of it and treat it too much as simply a religious service. While we do not emphasize too strongly, or, indeed, strongly enough, the work of the Sunday-school teacher as a spiritual guide and helper, we are apt to bestow too little attention upon the work of the teacher as an instructor. And so it comes to pass that the Sunday-school is largely a preaching service in a smaller way and modified form, and many a teacher is merely a preacher.

But the Sunday-school is a *school* for the instruction of the children and youth in the Word of God, and it is not reasonable to expect that biblical instruction is to be imparted, and biblical knowledge acquired, by any radically different methods or processes than those which are used in our public schools for instruction in other lines.

Because there is a lack of appreciation of the Sunday-school, as a school, there is too little attention paid to methods of instruction. Reviews are often either entirely omitted, or are regarded as a bugbear. Those who criticise the Sunday-school, whether in a friendly or an unfriendly spirit, turn their attention first of all to the results, or the lack of results, in this line of instruction. In public addresses and in print, the ignorance of Sunday-school scholars in regard to the Bible is pointed out, and on that basis the school is judged.

It is not fair to judge of it altogether as a school. But it is fair to expect that scholars after studying the story of the earthly life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, or the history of the early Christian Church as recorded in the Book of Acts, for six or twelve months, will be able to give an intelligent and correct account of the main features of that life or history. If they are not able to do so, as is often the case, it is mainly because the school has not been thought of and conducted as an

educational organization, and the odium rests not so much upon the scholars as upon those who have the direction of the work.

If we study the character of the Sunday-school established by Robert Raikes in Gloucester, in 1780, we shall find that it was in reality only a public school held on Sunday, wherein were gathered the poorer children of a manufacturing quarter of that city for instruction in reading and in the elementary truths of religion ; and historians inform us that his Sunday-school was the incentive of and foundation for a public-school system in England.

If the Sunday-school scholars at the present day are not properly instructed, it is mainly because we have not persevered in the use of public-school methods. There are, however, scores of Sunday-schools, thoroughly organized, with a system of gradation and courses of study corresponding to the system which prevails in our public schools.

And it is a noteworthy fact that these schools do not fail in securing attendance, and maintain-

ing proper discipline, because of the adoption of public-school methods. They are successful in the work of instruction and fruitful in spiritual results, furnishing sufficient evidence of the practicability and wisdom of such a course.

NEED OF CLOSE RANGE



Need Of Close Range

SOME years ago, when the writer was superintendent of a Sunday-school, one of his teachers came to him at the close of the school session with the inquiry, "Where is Sammie W——?"

The man was a remarkably intelligent Bible student. He had the faculty of imparting the knowledge which he possessed to others. He was faithful in the general application of the practical truths of the lessons. But he had no conception of any responsibility, opportunity, or privilege for labor with or for the members of his class outside the Sunday-school session.

And so it came to pass that when Sammie W—— had been absent from the class for several Sundays in succession, that teacher came to the superintendent with an inquiry which revealed the fact that he considered that the responsibility for the scholars of his class outside the Sunday-school session rested upon the superintendent of the school, rather than upon himself as a teacher.

Teachers who have such a narrow and imperfect conception of their work as this may be fitly typified by the guide-board represented at the head of this chapter. It is of some value to the traveler, but located at such a distance from the highway, and so inconveniently, as to be of comparatively little use.

The Sunday-school teacher whose work is confined to the Sunday-school session comes far short of the full measure of his or her responsibility and privilege. The teacher's work is really twofold. There is the work of instruction, and there is the work of influencing and specially helping. While we recognize this natural

division, we cannot separate the one from the other without loss. So far as imparting the truth of the lesson in the class on Sunday is concerned, it can never be satisfactorily done unless there be, on the teacher's part, not only a knowledge of the lesson, but also a knowledge of the individual members of the class.

And this knowledge of the scholars may be acquired in full only by intercourse with them outside the school and familiarity with their daily life. While the work of instruction is important, the work of guiding and influencing is of far greater importance. And the best opportunities for this work are to be found outside the Sunday-school session. Dr. H. Clay Trumbull, who has treated this matter in a masterful way in "Teaching and Teachers," is authority for the statement that "a teacher inevitably influences more by what he is seven days in the week than by what he says one day in the week." And what a teacher is in daily life, in character and example, in effort and influence, will have fullest force with the scholars of his class, as he comes

largely into contact with them, and as they have an opportunity to see and know him. The teacher is really the pastor of the class, and the pastor, in order to accomplish the best results, must give attention to pastoral work.

This personal work and influence will find various appropriate channels for its manifestation and operation.

One of the least things which every teacher can do, and ought to do, is to look after the absentees from the class. Whenever a scholar is absent for a single Sunday, that scholar should, before the next Sunday, have positive assurance that his teacher missed him, and desires, if possible, his speedy return. An attempt on the part of the teacher to manifest such interest oftentimes opens the way for helpfulness in times of special trial or need in the life of the scholars.

Some teachers arrange for an occasional meeting of their scholars, during the week, for study. These seasons, wherever practicable, are certainly very enjoyable and helpful, and the work

may be so arranged and conducted as not only not to interfere with or hinder the work in the class on Sunday, but to help it greatly.

The teacher should also, if possible, mingle in the social life of the members of the class. In that way acquaintance and friendship may be cultivated, and opportunities found to manifest an interest in the scholar such as will never arise in the Sunday-school session. It is a legitimate part of the teacher's work to arrange for an occasional social gathering for the class, and to provide suitable amusements and entertainment. One teacher who had but little ability for the work of instruction, succeeded in holding and helping a large class of boys because of her interest in their social life.

Again, the teacher who gives attention to pastoral work will be most likely to secure the co-operation of the parents. When manifesting in this way an interest in the scholars, and coming in contact with them in their homes, opportunities will be found for conference with the parents, which, rightly used, will be sure to result

in mutual co-operation for the best good of the boys and girls. The Sunday-school teacher's sphere of influence includes the home and the parents, as well as the class and the scholars. And many teachers have opportunities in their pastoral work to help the scholars in the preparation of their lessons. A word of explanation, a little questioning, the suggestion of some point to be looked up, in these and in other ways help may be imparted in connection with a pastoral call or in a casual meeting, by the way, at some time during the week.

In the week-day intercourse and labor the teacher may best make personal appeals and personal application of the truths taught. Something may be accomplished in the class in the way of seeking to lead souls to Christ. Much more may be accomplished out of the class with the individual members one by one.

A lady who for years had been the teacher of a class of girls, and who had endeavored to be faithful in preparation for teaching, and in class work, found that her scholars did not

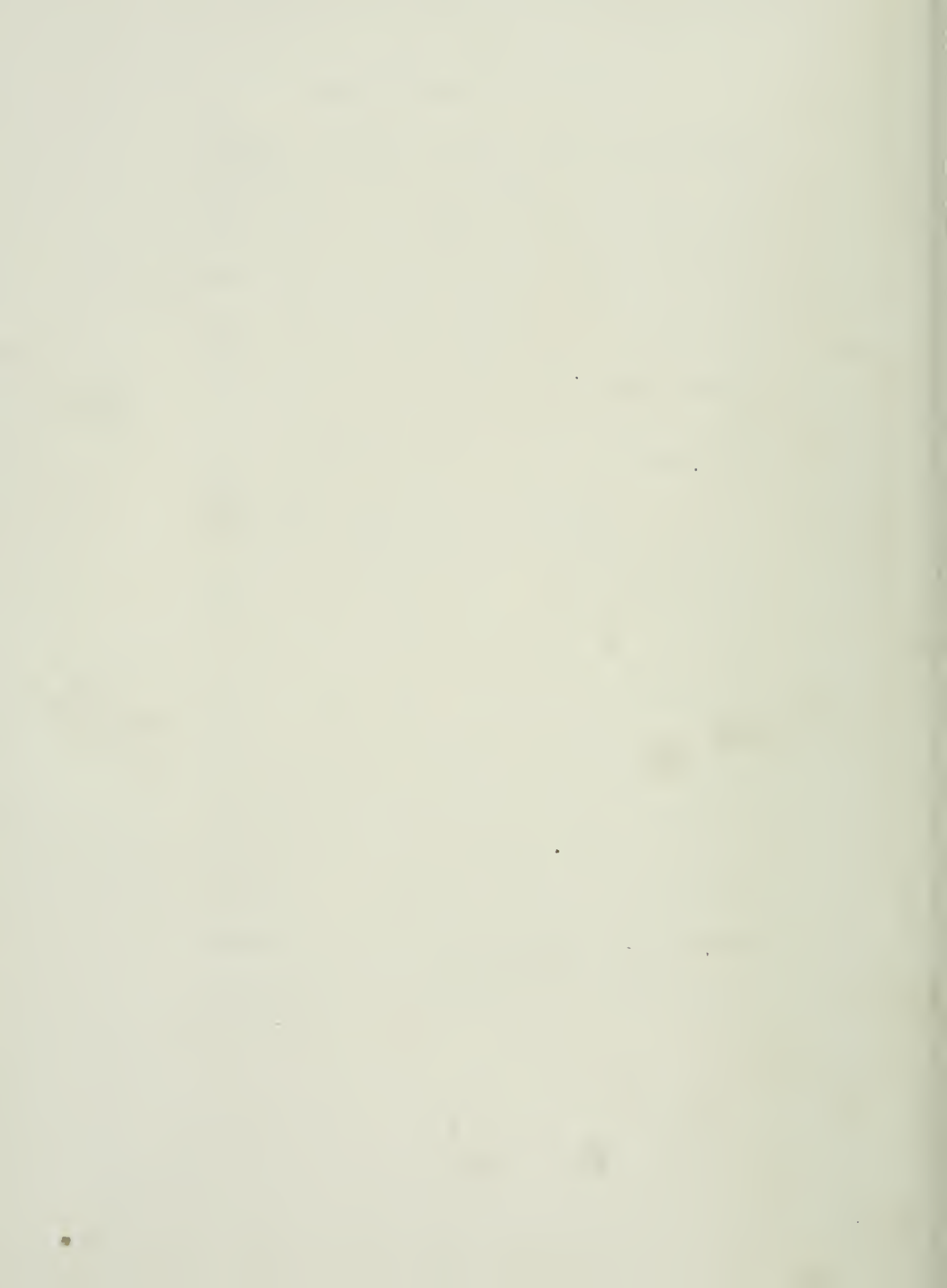
come to Christ until she undertook pastoral work in their behalf. Visiting them in their homes one by one, conversing with them concerning their personal salvation, and praying with them, she had the pleasure of seeing them all come into the kingdom of Christ by public profession of their faith in him within a few months. This work was undertaken by her with great reluctance. She went forth with fear and trembling, but to her surprise and joy they received her visits with pleasure, and in some instances she found that they were really anxious to have her talk with them on the subject.

But there are some teachers whose employment or circumstances are such that they have but little opportunity for pastoral work in the ways suggested. Such may, however, avail themselves of the privilege of correspondence, which is a powerful agency for good in the hands of the teacher. In another chapter an instance is cited to show how a teacher, residing temporarily in Ohio, held and influenced a class of boys in Connecticut for months through this

medium. A letter, or even a brief note, may be a swift and powerful messenger for good. Even where the work of visitation and personal effort is undertaken, correspondence may be employed as a supplementary agency. And in cases where but little else can be done, a teacher may accomplish much good by writing to his scholars, giving expression to the desires that he has for their spiritual welfare, imparting counsel, and manifesting affection and interest.

The Sunday-school teacher's work is one of great responsibility and of glorious privilege. He may be, and he should be, the friend, counselor, and guide of those who are committed to his care. Living and walking with them, in the events and circumstances of daily life, manifesting an interest in all that pertains to their happiness and welfare, sharing in their confidence, esteem, and affection, it is his precious privilege to accomplish a work in their behalf which is not excelled in importance and blessedness by any work committed to mortal hands.

BEING IN PLACE





BEING IN PLACE

SOMETHING more than a post and a board is necessary to constitute a good guide-board. They must be in their proper relations to each other. The picture of the post standing in its proper place, and a board lying upon the ground near by, half hidden from view, affords an illustration of the Sunday-school teacher who is irregular in attendance.

Such a person may be thorough in the preparation of the lesson, and faithful in class work; she may manifest a personal interest in the individual members of the class, and enjoy their esteem and affection,—but the power and value of all these things will be greatly vitiated by habits of irregular attendance on the part of the

teacher. And if the absences are frequent, the question may legitimately arise, whether such a person is, any longer, truly the teacher of that class. The nominal relation may still continue, but so far as pertains to real vital contact with the scholars, thorough work in their behalf, and an abiding, controlling influence over them, that person has ceased to be a teacher, and it would be far better to terminate the nominal relation.

Of course, reference now is had to teachers whose absences are due to careless habits or trivial reasons. There are cases of unavoidable absence. Not many teachers can be present every Sunday in the year, and for years in succession. Some teachers who are obliged to be absent retain a strong hold upon their classes, and accomplish a good work in their behalf.

A few years ago the writer found a class of boys in a small country Sunday-school among the New England hills, whose teacher, a young man, had gone away to pursue a course of study. Despite his continued absence, he was

still truly the teacher of the class. Sunday after Sunday, for months in succession, the boys met in their accustomed place, and engaged in the exercises of the school and the study of the lessons with hearty interest. The teacher's seat was vacant, but his work went on almost the same as if he were present. He was present with them in spirit, and the boys knew it, and that was the secret of his continued influence. Rarely did they assemble in the class on Sunday without having read to them, by one of their own number, some message from their absent teacher; and these messages usually contained helpful thoughts and suggestions on the lesson for the day.

This was an uncommon case, but it illustrates, in a forcible way, the experience of many Sunday-school teachers, who are sometimes absent from the class for a Sunday or two, or for a longer period, because of circumstances beyond their control. Such teachers make some provision for their classes, endeavor in some way to put forth special effort in their behalf, are

always with them in spirit, and continue to be true and efficient teachers.

But the irregular teacher is careless in the matter of attendance. If she isn't feeling quite as well as usual ; if the weather is unpleasant, or the traveling bad ; if she has company, or desires to go somewhere else ; if she was out late Saturday night, and consequently is tired on Sunday ; if she doesn't like some plan or method adopted by the superintendent ; if the lesson is hard, and she hasn't taken time to study it ; if only two or three of her scholars are present ; if some obstacles have been encountered,—for some such reason she will absent herself from the class for a Sunday or two, and never dream that she has been guilty of unfaithfulness. Sometimes such a teacher will make provision for the class by asking the first person she meets, or thinks of, to take her place, without special regard to the fitness of such a person for the work of teaching, and in this way harm may be done.

“Not a very flattering picture of a Sunday-

school teacher," do you say? But most superintendents will recognize it as a true picture.

A short time ago, in a superintendents' conference, a speaker was relating his experience with just such a teacher, and asked advice of his brethren as to the best course to pursue. The teacher was an excellent young woman, devout in spirit, intelligent, possessing many fine qualities, but careless and thoughtless in regard to the matter of regular attendance at Sunday-school. Her fine class of boys, once numbering fourteen or fifteen, had dwindled to four or five, and some of these were losing their interest. What should he do?

He had hesitated about admonishing or removing her, because of her sensitiveness, fearing that he might not only offend her, but also the members of her family, some of whom were prominent in the church.

No subject presented during the day touched a more sympathetic chord in the hearts of all present than did this. Evidently it was not an uncommon experience ; and while all recognized

the delicacy and difficulty of the task, the universal opinion was that such a teacher should be admonished and reformed if possible, and, if this could not be accomplished, she should be removed.

The example and influence of such a teacher are always harmful. There is no surer way to break up a class, and recruit the ranks of premature graduates, than to leave the class in charge of a teacher who is thus irregular.

Yet such teachers are not incorrigible. Most of them are thoughtless and careless. A word of kindly admonition, some object lesson which will reveal to them their position, may be all that will be required to bring about their reformation.

The superintendent of a large Sunday-school, who had been greatly annoyed by irregular teachers, made use of an object lesson which proved quite effective.

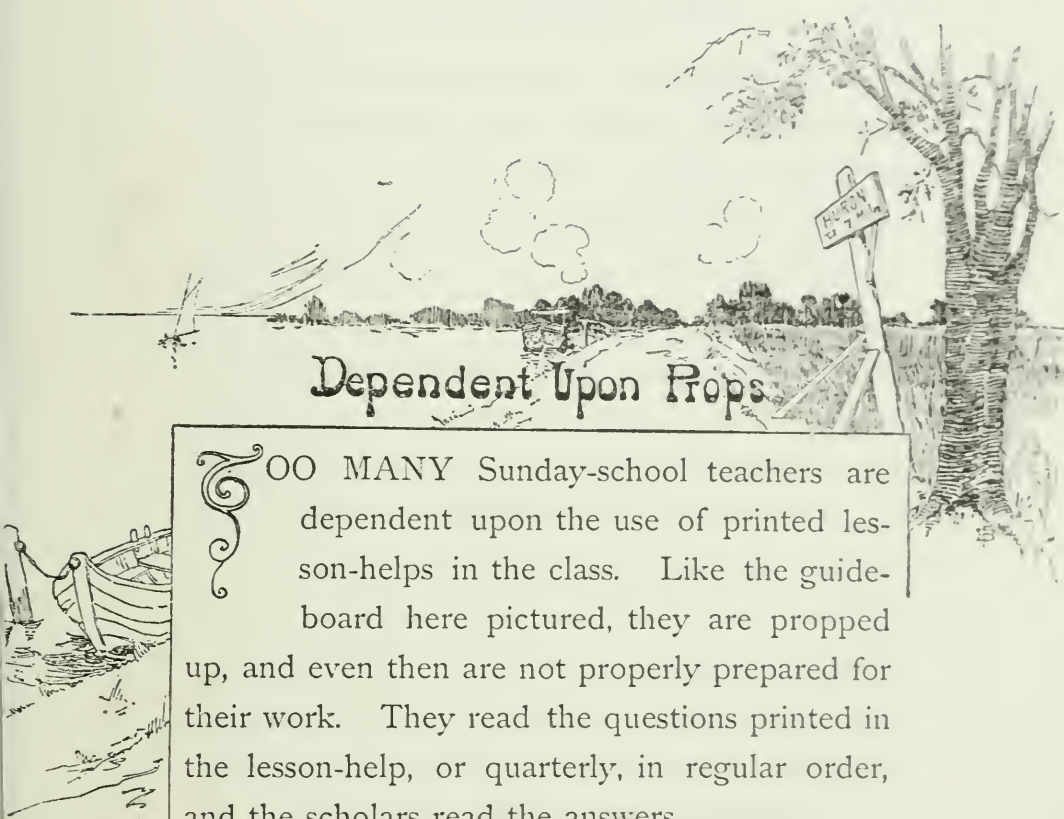
One Sunday morning, as his pastor was starting for an exchange in a neighboring town, he asked the privilege of accompanying him. He

had notified no one of his intended absence, and had made no provision for the conduct of the school. When the time came for the Sunday-school to assemble, no one appeared to take charge of the exercises. There was confusion, anxiety, and disappointment. At the close of the evening service, some of his teachers, having learned his whereabouts in the morning, gathered about him, and began to upbraid him for his neglect of duty. "That was a pretty trick which you played on us this morning," they said: "you ought to be ashamed of yourself to go off and leave us in that way." He listened to their rebukes, and, when they had finished speaking, calmly replied, "You treat me in that way sometimes." They saw the point, profited by the lesson, and were thenceforth more scrupulous in punctual and regular attendance at the school.

We expect the pastor to be in the pulpit or provide a substitute. We hold the superintendent responsible for the conduct of the school, and rebuke him for any neglect of duty. Let us re-

member, if we are teachers, that a similar responsibility rests upon us to be in position every Sunday, or, if unavoidably detained, to make some provision for the care and conduct of the class, either by notifying the superintendent in advance of every intended absence, or by securing the very best substitute it is possible for us to obtain. It rests with every teacher, by prompt and careful attention to this matter, to greatly enhance the power and value of his or her own work, and to lift a burden from the heart of the superintendent, whose chief difficulty in the conduct of the school may be caused by irregularity of attendance on the part of some of his teachers.

DEPENDENT UPON PROPS



Dependent Upon Props

TOO MANY Sunday-school teachers are dependent upon the use of printed lesson-helps in the class. Like the guide-board here pictured, they are propped up, and even then are not properly prepared for their work. They read the questions printed in the lesson-help, or quarterly, in regular order, and the scholars read the answers.

It is a mechanical performance with but little of heart, life, or power in it. The individuality of both teacher and scholar is lost in this process of running the lesson through a ready-made mold. Scholars are encouraged by it to come to the class without having even looked at the

lesson. In fact, the writer recently visited one church where it is the custom to leave the quarterly lesson papers in the seats from Sunday to Sunday, and not take them home at all.

And why is this not a good custom for schools and classes where the lessons are treated in the manner described? The trouble of carrying the quarterlies back and forth, as well as the danger of losing them, would be avoided, they would be preserved in better condition throughout the quarter, and a saving in expense would be effected. As the lessons are all numbered and dated, both teacher and scholars could find the lesson for the day very readily, upon taking up the quarterly in the seat, for the first time since the last session of the school.

Does some one exclaim, What a ridiculous idea! So it is, indeed, but no more so than many things that take place in classes where the teacher leans upon the lesson paper, just as the guide-board leans upon its props. One class conducted in this way occupies the pews of a church, and during the lesson study (so called)

the teacher sits in the pew in front of those occupied by the class, and reads the questions with his back toward the class, never once turning during the entire exercise to look one of them in the face.

In another school, a class of young ladies, apparently bright and intelligent, is taught by one of the deacons of the church. He reads the questions, and they in turn read the answers. One Sunday a stranger was in the class. As a question came to her in the regular order, she was about to give an answer in her own language and from her own personal knowledge of the lesson, when the young lady who sat next to her reached over, and, pointing to a certain place in the quarterly, said, "There is the answer."

In a class of middle-aged men, when the lesson was on the experiences of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, the teacher, who was reading the printed questions in regular order, came upon this one: "Why was Barnabas stoned instead of Paul?" One of the scholars found an answer, and read it, and the teacher was about

to pass on to the next question, when the writer, who was present, ventured to call his attention to the fact that the question was erroneous, and that Paul was stoned instead of Barnabas. "Oh, well!" said he, "the question is here in the quarterly as I read it, and it must be all right."

In another case the teacher was reading the questions in regular order, when he came to one that to him seemed decidedly irrelevant. "I don't see any use in that question," said he, after he had read it, and obtained an answer, "but I suppose we are expected to ask them all."

It is a very common experience for teachers who follow this course to "lose the place," and read some of the questions a second time, without attracting the attention of any one in the class. In many cases where the questions are numerous, and arranged under several general divisions, the teacher has been known to spend the entire time devoted to lesson study on the printed questions for "review," "connecting events," and "introduction," without reaching

the questions bearing directly on the lesson at all.

One Sunday, in the class of one of these "quarterly-crutch teachers," the writer ventured to interrupt the even flow of the regular order by asking the teacher for his opinion concerning one of the important practical truths of the lesson that had not been touched. At once the proceedings were stayed, and the eyes of all the class were turned upon the writer, with an expression which seemed to say, "How dare you introduce such an innovation?" After a little time spent in the discussion of the point in question, the teacher said, turning again to his quarterly, "We will now resume the study of the lesson." That teacher, who was the pastor of the church, evidently considered the action of the writer as much out of order as though he had been interrupted in a similar way while reading one of his written sermons in the pulpit.

And these are only a few of many instances which might be cited to show how men and women of good sense and intelligence have

allowed themselves to become slaves to the habit of relying upon printed "helps." Multitudes of other teachers, who have not perhaps gone to such an extreme, are yet in large measure pursuing a similar course, and would be quite at a loss to know what to do if their lesson papers were taken from them in the class.

This condition of affairs comes about naturally and almost imperceptibly. The habit grows on one. The teachers are not aware of their real position. If they could see themselves as others see them they would most certainly be quick to realize the ridiculousness, and at the same time the seriousness, of their attitude. It is a serious matter, not only in relation to the teacher, but also in relation to the scholars and to the general interests of Bible study and Sunday-school work. As has been already stated, the teacher loses his or her individuality, and, as a consequence, his or her power. The scholars lose interest and purpose in the matter of Bible study. One of the commonest arguments for the use of the lesson help in the class is that it enables those

who have not studied the lesson to consider the lesson in the class without making an utter failure. And this is at the same time one of the strongest arguments against its use in the class, since it proves that an inducement is thus offered to the scholars not to study the lesson at home.

This use of the lesson paper stands in the way of thoughtful consideration of the word of God. If you wish proof of this statement, ask any one of the scholars in a class that has been taught in this way some simple question of fact or doctrine bearing directly on the lesson, but not in the regular line of the printed questions, and behold what a look of astonishment and ignorance will greet you.

The "help" thus used hides from view, and so dishonors, the Bible. Many Sunday-school boys and girls have no idea that their lessons have any direct connection with the Bible. They have no conception of any source from which the lessons come, back of, or beyond, the "helps" or those who prepare them.

A friend and fellow-worker had occasion, not

long ago, to test a class of bright boys on this point ; and he found that while they had a good understanding of the lessons which they had studied, they did not realize that those lessons were from the Bible. And it is a fact that in many Sunday-schools, and in more classes, it is sometimes difficult to find even one copy of the text-book which we pretend to study in the Sunday-school, the Bible.

We have drifted far beyond the bounds of reason in this matter, and are in danger of defeating, by our present methods, one of the main issues of Sunday-school work, the thorough study of the Bible.

Those who are watching the progress of the Sunday-school are quick to detect this result. But they are not always as quick to detect the true cause. Many have ascribed the cause to the International Lesson Committee, and have clamored for a different series of lessons. Some so-called inductive lessons have been produced, but it has already been discovered that these are not a true and sufficient panacea. Teachers

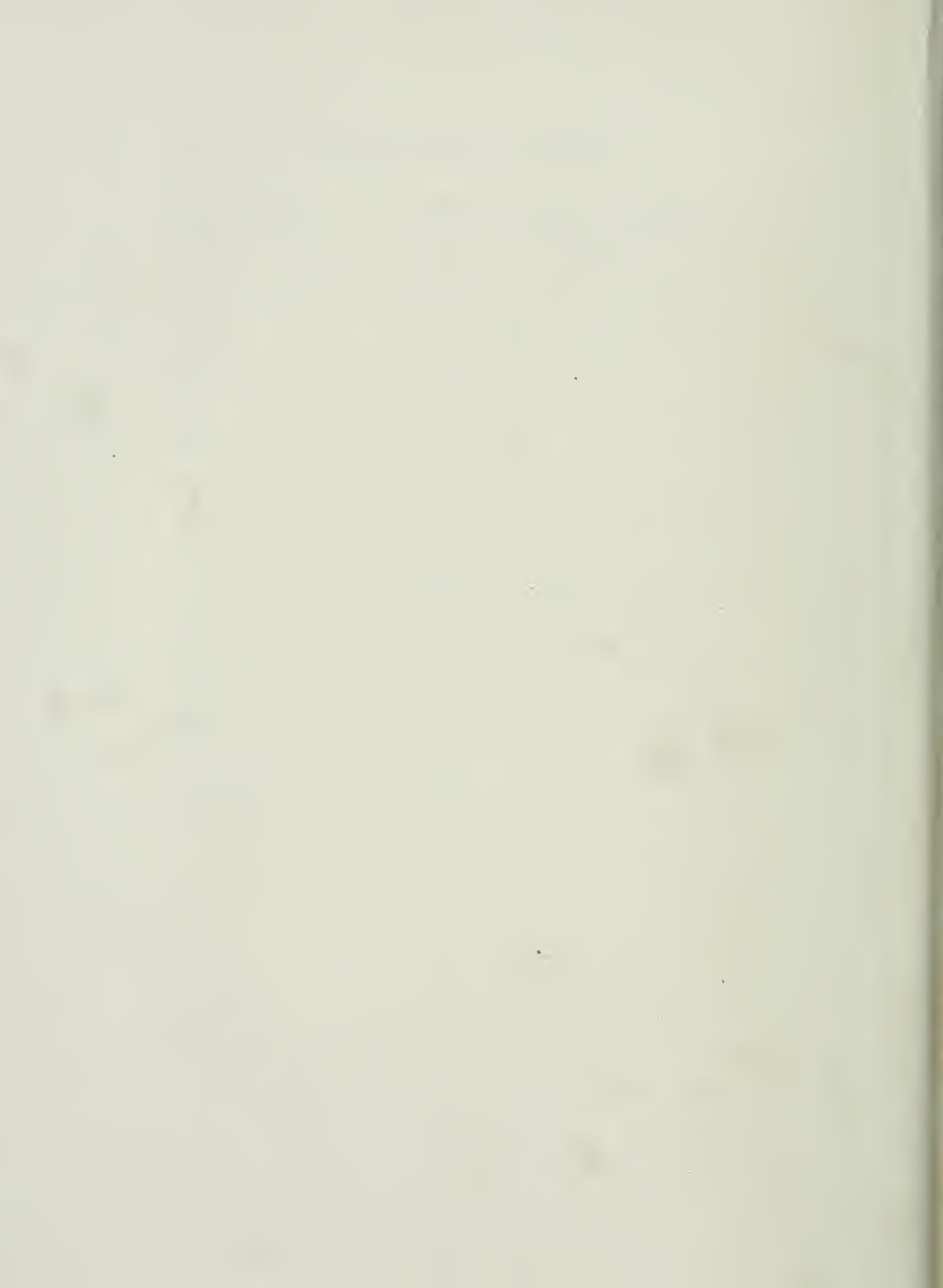
have been encountered who pursue the same course with the inductive papers as with others, reading the questions in regular order, and asking the scholars to read the Scripture texts to which they refer. This necessitates the presence of the Bible in the class, and this is an advantage; but even with the so-called improved inductive lessons there is opportunity for the formal, routine, and lifeless work already spoken of.

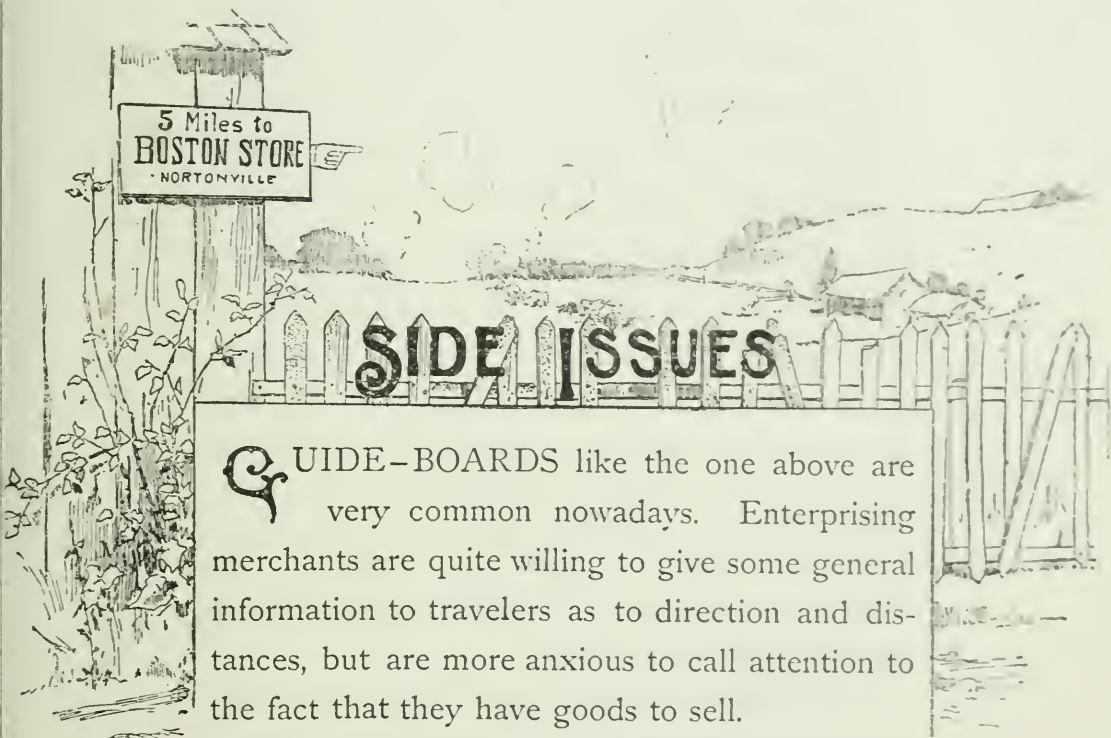
The trouble is not with the series of lessons. Much time, breath, and ink have been wasted in blaming the International Lesson Committee for that for which they are in no sense or measure responsible. The trouble is not altogether with the makers of lesson-helps. They produce that which is demanded by the trade, which is certainly a sensible course to pursue in any business enterprise. The helps have their own place and importance. They are of great value in home study of the lessons. They may not be without value, if used wisely in the class. But when the tendency to depend upon them exclusively, and to follow them slavishly, in every particular, is

strong, may it not be well to adopt radical measures in reference to their use in the class?

The superintendent is the one to lead the way in this reform. But our main reliance for the ushering in of better methods of study, and for the accomplishment of greater and more satisfactory results, must be upon the teachers. When they are willing to devote time and study and persevering effort to the work, seeking to possess the lesson so that it shall possess them, and then aiming to teach it in their own individual ways, to the scholars in their classes, as not only a message from God, but also as a message from their own hearts and lives to the hearts and lives of those under their care, then will dawn a better day for our Sunday-schools.

SIDE ISSUES





GUIDE-BOARDS like the one above are very common nowadays. Enterprising merchants are quite willing to give some general information to travelers as to direction and distances, but are more anxious to call attention to the fact that they have goods to sell.

There are Sunday-school teachers of whom this board reminds one. They devote the time set apart for instruction in the class on Sunday to a consideration of those matters that are commonly spoken of as "side issues," and do not aim to teach directly and with care the main points of practical value in the lesson.

In a previous chapter, attention was directed

to those teachers who feel obliged to follow, without deviation, the course marked out in the lesson help, and to ask all the printed questions in regular order. The teachers now under consideration go to the other extreme. They swing clear of the lesson help, for the most part, yet have no definite plan of their own to follow. They may begin with some matter of comparatively trifling importance connected with the lesson, or suggested by it, and then either go off on a tangent, airing some pet theory or doctrine, or else drift along, as one point suggests another, until, like a ship without a helm, they get far away from the true course.

On Sunday, some years ago, the writer was in a class of middle-aged men and women, taught by an ex-pastor. The lesson was on the death of Samson. The teacher was greatly interested in the subject of physical culture, and the mere mention of Samson's strength seemed to present to him a wonderful opportunity to air his notions on that subject. He exhorted the members of his class to give close attention to the laws of health,

and to train their children in a proper way. The mothers in his class received a special exposition of his views in reference to the matter of tight lacing. And so, while the instruction of that hour in that class was in a sense "healthy," it had very little connection with the lesson in hand, and might just as properly have been attached to a lesson on the resurrection of Lazarus.

Another teacher was teaching a lesson on the miraculous draught of fishes. He had read some description of the different kinds of fish that are found in the Sea of Galilee, so he told the class about them. Speaking of fish reminded him of the nets used in catching them, and some time was spent in a discussion in regard to the character and size of the nets. Then somebody in the class made an inquiry about the boats used by the disciples. The teacher was not posted on that point, but he had once attended the launching of a new boat, while on a visit to the seashore, and he proceeded to give the class a description of that interesting occur-

rence. That was all he had time to do that Sunday.

A learned doctor of divinity was called upon to teach a class one Sunday when the lesson was on "Christ in Gethsemane." He had traveled in Palestine, and had visited Gethsemane. He gave a description of the place, and spoke of the olive-trees growing there. Then he thought of olive-oil and its uses, and this led him to speak of butter. Butter suggested to his mind the modern substitute, oleomargarine, and he talked about that. And so he used the half-hour, giving special prominence to a consideration of the comparative merits of olive-oil, butter, and oleomargarine as articles of diet.

These few instances illustrate how teachers, either intentionally or thoughtlessly, may fritter away the golden opportunities of the time devoted to lesson study in the class. Some, as has been shown, consider the Sunday-school class as a proper place to air their pet theories or doctrines, or to display their knowledge in certain lines. Other teachers, as we have seen, drift.

They may start out on some point having direct connection with the lesson, but, lacking a clearly defined plan for its teaching, they are easily led from one thing to another, until, without intending to do so, they have drifted away from the essential points of the lesson, and made an unprofitable use of the time. The temptation to do this, and to make unduly prominent matters of comparatively little importance, is ever present with the Sunday-school teacher.

The teacher should, of course, be well informed. If a boy is disposed to question the veracity of the statement that Peter assumed the attitude of prayer on the house-top, because he (the boy) is thinking only of a steep roof, such as he is accustomed to see, the teacher should be prepared to dispel his doubts by a simple, brief description of Oriental roofs, and not feel called upon—as was once done by a teacher—to chide him for doubting a statement of God's Word, or try to explain the matter by saying that "what is impossible with men is possible with God."

But between such a brief explanation and the consideration given to such matters in some Sunday-school classes there is a wide difference.

Every teacher should have a plan for the teaching of each lesson. That plan should bring into prominence the important truths of that lesson. It may not always be practicable to adhere to the plan prepared beforehand, but, even if the plan is laid aside, the teacher will be sure to do better work because of it. Let us see to it that we do not spend so much time upon the husks and shells that we have none to devote to the kernels, that are of greatest value.

IMITATION GUIDES



IMITATION GUIDES

TWIDING along, just at nightfall, over a strange road, the traveler is anxious to reach his destination before the darkness gathers about him. He is not fully informed in regard to the route, and is largely dependent upon the information that he can gather as he goes, especially that which is upon the guide-boards.

Presently he discerns in the dim distance what appears to be a guide-board, and he consoles himself with the assurance that when he reaches it he will obtain all needed information.

He travels on. But imagine his surprise and indignation, when, upon at last reaching the sup-

posed guide-board, he finds something of the sort shown below.

Many a traveler has been disappointed and disgusted by an experience of this kind. A gen-

tleman of excellent Christian character and marked ability, prominent in the church, and influential in public affairs, had a class of young men in a large, flourishing Sunday-school. The superintendent was deeply interested in those young men, and was gratified to see them gather about their teacher Sunday after Sunday, with every indication of intense interest in their work.

Presently he discovered, to his surprise and sorrow, that instead of teaching lessons from the Word of God, the teacher was giving those young men chapter after chapter of his experiences and observations in an extended journey across the continent.



And when the superintendent interviewed him, he found that his conception of the nature and scope of his work was that the important thing for him to do, was to interest those young men, and incidentally give them useful information. That accomplished, he considered his duty done. He did not consider that Bible study had any proper place in his class.

Another so-called Sunday-school teacher, in another school, was in the habit of reading serial stories to her scholars as the regular work in the class, Sunday after Sunday. Other teachers go through the lesson very hurriedly, and of course very superficially, and then devote the greater portion of the time to reading to the scholars, or to promiscuous conversation on a variety of topics, which is but little better than gossip.

Our guide-board (?) fitly represents such teachers. What their conception of the Sunday-school is cannot readily be determined. Evidently they regard Bible study in the class as dull, uninteresting, unimportant work. They are like some preachers who resort to sensational

or secular topics in their preaching to interest their hearers. Such preachers and teachers are flattered and encouraged in their course by an apparent show of success. Numbers increase, and interest for a time is intense; but sooner or later scholars and congregations tire of such entertainment, numbers wane, and the interest dies out. There is nothing that will kindle deep and permanent interest like Bible study.

It is perfectly legitimate, and sometimes very desirable, to relate experiences, or to tell or read stories, when these are a means to an end. Some classes, and some individual scholars, must be approached in that way, and can be reached only in that way. But this sort of thing, in and out of the class, must be recognized as a means, not as an end.

The writer knows a gentleman who, years ago, gathered a large class into the Sunday-school, from the horse-sheds, by the use of just such means. Going out to the sheds, after the morning service, on Sunday, he found a group of men discussing the spring freshet, which was

then at its height. Presently some one proposed that they go down to the bridge near by and take a look at the swollen river. He went with them. That entire intermission between the morning and afternoon services was devoted to sight-seeing and to various comments on the freshet. Before leaving the party the gentleman made an appointment to meet them next Sunday at the horse-sheds, when he would tell them about some former and more remarkable freshets on the Connecticut River. It was not long before he led them to the story of the deluge in Noah's day, and to a corner of the church auditorium ; and ere long those men were deeply interested in Bible study under the leadership of that wise, earnest teacher.

We are familiar with the old proverb, "All roads lead to Rome." In the work of every Sunday-school teacher all desires and purposes, all plans and efforts, should lead to earnest, thorough study of the Word of God, and to Jesus Christ the Saviour who is revealed in all parts of that blessed Word. When such is the case, the

teacher will find the road in most cases a short one. And the teachers who seek diligently and earnestly to teach the truths of the Bible, actuated by the right spirit, and using the best methods, are sure to win success. Isaiah 55 : 10, 11.

SUGGESTIVE POINTING



SUGGESTIVE POINTING

DURING the past few years, decided interest has been manifested in highways by the wheelmen. Under the direction of officers of the "League of American Wheelmen," special guide-boards, of which the above is a fair illustration, have been erected in many towns. Information is imparted in reference to the direction and distance to different places, as on ordinary boards, and also as to the location or direction of railroad stations, hotels, springs of water by the roadside, dangerous places, points of interest, and the like.

The character and condition of the roads are indicated by means of a simple system of letters

and figures which are readily understood. A indicates a good road ; B, a fair one ; C, a poor one. 1 indicates a level or rolling surface ; 2, small hills ; and 3, a very hilly road. Much time and labor have been given to securing and presenting in available form this varied information, which constitutes an important addition to guide-board literature for the benefit of all travelers, and especially for wheelmen.

Many town authorities, in recognition of the superiority of these guide-boards, are adopting them, and in some places they may soon supplant all others.

And so Sunday-school teachers who have a good fund of information, and who know how to use that information for the benefit of their classes, are by that very fact the better fitted for efficient service. This is especially true in regard to a general knowledge of the Bible. Yet it is well also for the teacher to be posted in regard to the character and functions of the church in its varied forms of organization and departments of operation.

It is a truth which has been often enforced and variously illustrated, that a Sunday-school teacher needs to have knowledge of something more than the lesson in hand, and more knowledge concerning that even than there will be opportunity to impart, in order to teach that lesson to the best advantage.

Teachers'-meetings and normal classes for the training of teachers are of great value as aids in the acquirement of that knowledge. But no teacher need be dependent upon these. If there is a proper appreciation of the importance of the work and of the necessity of such an equipment for service, some way will be found for securing it, even in places where teachers'-meetings and normal classes are at first unknown. And there will also be the acquirement of wisdom and skill in the application of that knowledge to the individual capacities and needs of the members of the class, without which such knowledge would prove of comparatively little value.

Some years ago a young man was called upon

to take charge of a small class of boys in a Sunday-school in a New England village. He was uneducated, and had had no experience in the work. But he loved the Saviour, and was willing to labor for him in any position to which he might be called in the providence of God. He was obliged to work constantly during the week in an iron-foundry, and had few opportunities for recreation or study. But he was interested in his class, and determined to do his best, relying upon God for guidance and help.

He is still the teacher of that class. It is composed of over eighty men and women. During these years over three hundred different persons have been connected with the class. The teacher is a well-educated man. He has an extensive library. His home is adorned with many choice works of art. He is recognized as an eminent and thorough Bible student and teacher. And he has acquired his education, built up his library, and gathered his works of art, in order that he might the more faithfully and efficiently minister to the members

of his Sunday-school class, and so accomplish the work of a true Sunday-school teacher.

He labored hard to accomplish this. Time which other people would have devoted to rest and recreation he has devoted to study and research. Money which other people would have spent for pleasure or luxury he has spent in the acquisition of knowledge. He has availed himself of all possible sources of information, and has learned how to gather material for his work from reading, conversation, travel, and observation. He has familiarized himself with art and science in order to become a more efficient teacher of the truth. The Bible has always been his text-book, first, foremost, and dearest in all his thoughts, study, and teaching.

He illustrates in his life and work what may be accomplished by hundreds and thousands of Sunday-school teachers whose opportunities are certainly equal to his, and who may possess the same purpose if they are willing to pay the price.

But the guide-boards of the League of American Wheelmen seem to be accomplishing a

double purpose. One of our leading daily newspapers says of them in a recent article :

“These boards will act as a healthful educator of the general public as to the variety of highway conditions that abound in the state, and will all serve to advance the great work of road improvement to which the League of American Wheelmen has irrevocably committed itself. To be informed means, in this instance, to be actively interested, and lack of public information as to the general conditions of highways has been in the past the greatest obstacle encountered by road reformers. With public interest aroused, opposition will melt away, and a system of highways that will be the pride of the commonwealth will take the place of the rough and almost impassable thoroughfares now so common.”

Here is the suggestion of an important lesson for all Sunday-school workers concerning the general influence of their work in the community. We are frequently reminded of the great value of the Sunday-school in its influence upon the neighborhood, state, and nation. The writer

was once urged by an ungodly man to organize a Sunday-school in a little hamlet, and his principal motive in making the request was that the general condition of the community might be improved, and the price of real estate be advanced. He had a farm in the neighborhood which he wished to sell.

But the Sunday-school is largely what its teachers make it. As Bishop John H. Vincent has stated in his book, "The Modern Sunday-school," everything depends upon the work of the teacher. The singing, the talking, the order, the library books, the architecture, the appliances, the lesson helps, are all subordinate elements. The superintendent is chiefly valuable as he is able to select good teachers and to protect them in their work. And this work, as has been shown, is a work of instruction and of influencing and of guiding. It should go forward in the class on Sunday, and during the week in the everyday life and experiences of the scholars.

Surely no teacher can thus labor for and minister to a group of scholars without exerting a

very positive influence in their homes, and through their homes upon the community at large. And so every teacher is not only the instructor and leader of a class, but also one of the builders of the community and the nation.

Some one has said that there is hope for our nation in view of the fact that at least one-sixth of the population are studying the Bible in connection with the Sunday-schools. With even greater emphasis it may be stated that the ground of hope for our nation is to be found in the fact that over one million three hundred thousand Christian men and women, occupying positions as Sunday-school teachers, are continually, according to the measure of their faithfulness and devotion, by personal effort and influence, shaping character, and determining the forces that shall mold and govern the life of the nation.

A few years ago the writer became acquainted with a very wicked neighborhood. It was a small and somewhat secluded hamlet, located among the hills in one of those sections between parishes that are so frequently found in some of

the large country towns of New England. The nearest church was three miles away. Pastors of neighboring churches had attempted to evangelize the neighborhood by holding preaching services on Sunday afternoon or on a weekday evening, but no marked impressions were made, and, after a little, all such efforts were abandoned.

Intemperance, Sabbath desecration, and a horde of accompanying evils, prevailed and flourished. One resident built a small hall, and devoted it to Sunday dances, which were accompanied by intemperance, immorality, and sometimes fierce brawls and bloodshed.

Generations of children, some of them of illegitimate parentage, had been born and reared in the midst of these manifold evils. The Christian people in neighboring parishes thought of this place and spoke of it as a "hard hole," or a "God-forsaken place." They had no confidence in the efficacy of any attempts to redeem and purify it, and gave but little encouragement to the Sunday-school that was started there, with only thirteen members, about seven years ago.

But a marked change has come over that community. Some of the evils which formerly were rampant there have vanished. Others still exist, but in subdued form. The hall in which wicked people used to gather on the Sabbath, to profane the day, has now become a storehouse for the reception of wagons and farming-utensils. The general moral tone of the community has been elevated so that people round about notice the change. Those who at first scoffed at and slandered the Sunday-school workers now keep silence. The children are growing up under the influence of religious instruction, and some of the young people have become true and earnest Christians.

And this has been accomplished through the faithful and persevering efforts and salutary influence of three modest, unassuming, and untalented Sunday-school teachers. It is only one picture of many which might be presented, showing how, in all parts of our land, the influence of the Sunday-school teacher's work manifests itself in the character and life of the community.

AGREEMENT AMONG GUIDES



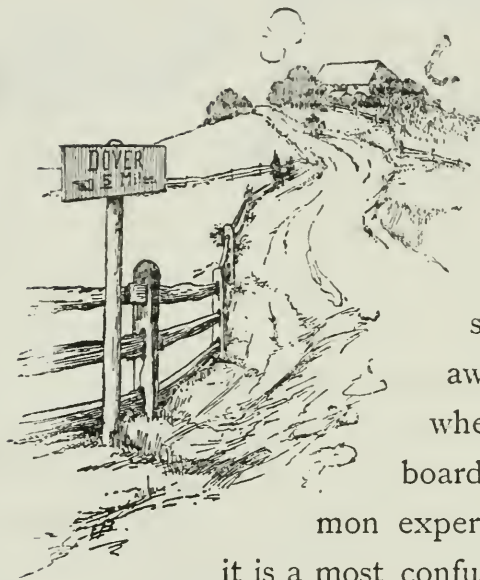
AGREEMENT AMONG GUIDES

ANY traveler seeking the way to Dover ought to be satisfied with a guide-board like the one above. It stands erect at the proper place. The lettering is clear and distinct. The hand seems to point in the right direction, and there is no occasion to dispute the statement in regard to the distance. Our traveler is disposed to trust in the information imparted by the guide-board, and journeys on towards Dover.

Let us look again at the picture. Do you discover far in the distance, on the road to Dover, another guide-board? It is so far away that we can hardly see it. Let us imagine that this latter guide-board is half a mile or more

from the one that stands in the foreground. Now let us, with our imaginary traveler, go on towards Dover.

We have reached the second guide-board, and



upon reading it discover, to our surprise and disappointment that, after proceeding half a mile in the direction of Dover, we are, according to its statement, two miles farther away from the town than when we left the first guide-board. This is not an uncommon experience with travelers. Yet

it is a most confusing and discouraging experience, to say the least. The guide-boards do not agree with each other. The traveler does not know which to believe. Evidently they were not put up at the same time, or by the same authorities.

These guide-boards may be suggestive of teachers in the same Sunday-school who do not

attend a teachers'-meeting, and who consequently lack unity of thought, purpose, and aim, in the work which they are attempting to do. For is it not true that, while we are accustomed to think of the teachers'-meeting as designed to assist the teacher in preparing to teach the lesson, one of its prime objects, after all, is to unify the officers and teachers of the school in their instruction, aims, and purposes?

Dr. H. Clay Trumbull makes this emphatic and wise statement in his "Yale Lectures on the Sunday-school:" "A Sunday-school without a weekly teachers'-meeting is rather an aggregation of schools than a unified school; each class being in a sense a school by itself." This recalls to mind a statement which appeared some years ago in the columns of *The Sunday School Times*. It was reported by a correspondent that a Sunday-school in one of the Western cities was trying the experiment of carrying forward its work without teachers; whereupon the Editor pertinently remarked that this was but a step beyond the experiment of

trying to carry forward the work of the Sunday-school without a teachers'-meeting.

A teachers'-meeting is essential to united, earnest, efficient work in any Sunday-school.

The responsibility for its appointment and maintenance rests primarily with the superintendent. The task imposed upon him is not an easy one. Many difficulties stand in the way. In the cities and villages, one of the chief difficulties is to find a time for holding it, on account of the great number of other engagements. In country districts, where the teachers are not located near each other, or near a central point, the principal difficulty seems to be to get them together.

But these and other difficulties have been repeatedly overcome, in city and country, by superintendents who, believing that the teachers'-meeting was an essential auxiliary, have determined to hold one, and have been willing to labor and to make sacrifices for the purpose of attaining that object.

Some superintendents have abandoned and discontinued fairly successful teachers'-meetings

because they did not secure the attendance of a majority of their teachers. Was this wise action? How would it do for the pastor to apply the same rule to the mid-week church prayer-meeting, and discontinue it in every case where the attendance of a majority of the members of the church was not secured?

But in considering this question in its relation to Sunday-school teachers, it may be proper to ask what responsibility they have for the appointment and maintenance of a teachers'-meeting. If the superintendent is disposed to neglect this matter, perhaps the teachers may band together and take the work in hand, as was done a few years ago by certain teachers in one of the Sunday-schools of Connecticut. The superintendent, either through indifference, or because of the pressure of other matters, had neglected the appointment of a teachers'-meeting. Some of his teachers were anxious that one should be held. One evening a few of them called at his house, and, taking him by the arm, informed him that they purposed to hold a teachers'-meeting,

and that he must accompany them to the meeting. He went with them ; and, as a result of this action, a teachers'-meeting was organized, and maintained for several years.

It may not be necessary in many instances to resort to that kind of "habeas corpus" process, but it certainly devolves upon teachers who desire a meeting, and appreciate its advantages, to contrive some plan by which one can be held. Teachers should also realize that their individual presence and support are essential. In the matter of attendance, while it is true that a good meeting can be maintained if only a few are present, it is also true that the attendance of a larger number will result in a much better meeting in its influence upon the school as a whole. To go, and to do, will necessitate self-denial and hard work, but here, as in other lines, "Father Paxson's" recipe holds good : "The key to success in Sunday-school work is hard work,—and it won't do itself."

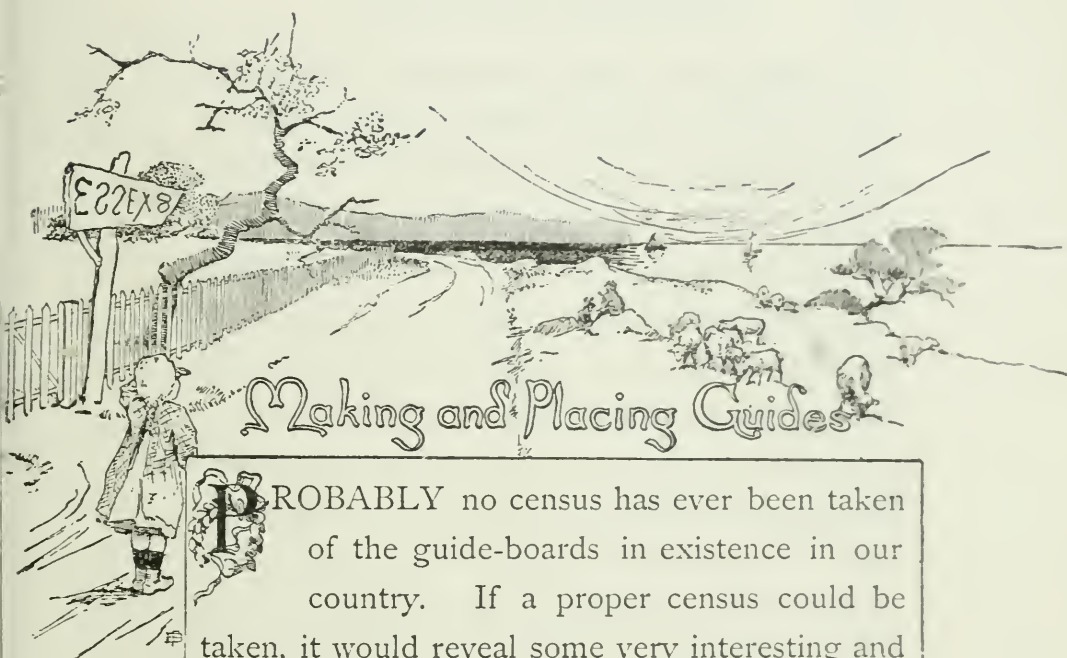
In one of the country towns of Connecticut, where a teachers'-meeting has been maintained

for more than a quarter of a century, on the Friday evening succeeding the famous blizzard of March 12, 1888, a lady teacher walked more than two miles over the drifts, and along a lonely highway, in order to attend the regular teachers'-meeting. The superintendent of that Sunday-school is a man of many cares and interests at home and abroad. His home is four miles from the church where the teachers'-meeting is held. But such is his appreciation of that meeting, and his devotion to it, that he will not allow any other engagement or duty, or any condition of the weather or traveling, to interfere with the holding of the teachers'-meeting on Friday evening of each week, or with his personal presence in the same. And many of his teachers have been inspired with the same spirit of interest and devotion. Such a spirit in superintendent and teachers will make the teachers'-meeting a possibility and a success anywhere.

The following general rules for the maintenance of a teachers'-meeting may be found helpful:

1. Have a stated time for holding it.
2. Hold the meeting in a cosy, homelike room.
3. Have a program for each meeting, and, if possible, send a copy in advance to each teacher. A general notice is not enough. .
4. Labor personally with those not inclined to come. Provide transportation for those who live at a distance, and who have no means of conveyance.
5. Give opportunity for the consideration of matters pertaining to the general interests of the school. Pray much for the meeting, and in the meeting for the school.
6. Have a social gathering of the teachers occasionally.
7. Get as many as possible to participate in the exercises of each meeting.
8. Avoid lecturing, or expository preaching, in the consideration of the lesson.
9. Aim to illustrate methods of teaching, so far as is practicable.
10. Provide for variety. Do not follow merely one plan or method too long.

MAKING AND PLACING GUIDES



PROBABLY no census has ever been taken of the guide-boards in existence in our country. If a proper census could be taken, it would reveal some very interesting and instructive facts. For one thing, it would be found that while there are a great many guide-boards of different kinds, and in different places, not one of the entire number sprang out of the soil and grew up on the spot where it now stands, as trees and bushes spring up and grow. Guide-boards have to be prepared for use, and placed in their proper positions.

Probably it would also be found that the best boards were prepared by skilled workmen, and

with great care. Once in a while the traveler finds by the roadside, standing in the place of a guide-board, and in a measure answering the purpose of one, a crude home-made affair, like that shown in the picture at the chapter-head. But when such a board is found, there is always a suspicion that it is not of official origin, and therefore not necessarily reliable in its directions.

There may be sections of our country where boards of this character are the best that can be had. If the traveler knows this, he is not disposed to be critical, but will accept with thankfulness that which has been provided, realizing that a very poor board is better than none.

In an unenlightened neighborhood, where a small Sunday-school had been started, the writer once met a young lady who was the teacher of a class of children. She was so ignorant that she did not know the meaning of "Jas. 2 : 5," which she found on her lesson-leaf, and she crossed the room to ask a visitor about it. He told her that it was a direction to find in the Bible, and read, the fifth verse of the second

chapter of the Book of James. Thanking him for his help, she returned to her class, and, taking up her Bible, she began to look for the Book of James. She commenced at Genesis, and went on through the Old Testament and the New Testament, until she came to James, and then she found the chapter and verse, and read it to her class. "What a poor teacher!" do you say? Yet she was not ashamed to confess her ignorance, she appreciated help, and she was persevering in her efforts.

But perhaps guide-boards as crude as the one in the picture, and teachers as ignorant as that young woman, are not common. Very few towns are so poor that they cannot put up better guide-boards than the one pictured. And yet, as we have seen, many guide-boards are imperfect in some respects, and poorly prepared.

The preparation of a good guide-board requires more time, care, and skill than is apparent to the casual observer. The post and the board must first be made ready with saw and plane. The board should have several coats of

paint before it is ready for lettering. The letters should be put on with paint prepared expressly for the purpose, and by one who has been trained for the work, and who knows by training and experience how to mark out the general plan for the words, and how to bring out each letter in its proper place and proportions. The most modern and durable guide-boards are made of iron, and the molding of the letters and their attachment to the board in a proper manner is a work of labor and of skill.

If it is important that guide-boards be prepared with such care for the service they are to render, what shall we say as to the preparation of those who are to be teachers and guides to the young in our Sunday-schools?

Many a Sunday-school superintendent finds it difficult to secure a sufficient number of competent teachers. With the great majority of superintendents this is one of the greatest obstacles to success. Existing classes in the school dwindle and disappear, and opportunities for forming new classes pass by unimproved, because there are no

teachers at hand ready for the work, and fitted to carry it on successfully. Whenever and wherever superintendents come together to discuss their work, and to help each other by mutual conference and interchange of experiences and methods, this question of securing teachers is sure to come up for consideration. And the usual conclusion is : "We must do the best we can with the material which we have ;" or, as a speaker in one of these meetings recently remarked, "We cannot hope to find teachers fitted for the work in large numbers, and we must do the best we can with those obtainable."

It may be necessary to accept some such conclusion in relation to the present ; but the lesson of our prepared guide-boards is that, so far as the future is concerned, we shall never have a sufficient number of such teachers as are needed until we prepare them.

There should be, if possible, in every church, a training-class for teachers, in charge of some competent leader. This class should be composed of young people who are willing to fit

themselves for the work of teaching by a simple course of study and training. If the matter were properly presented, there is no doubt that a sufficient number could be found in any parish to form such a class. The time and frequency of the meetings could be determined by circumstances. Perhaps in some communities a weekly evening meeting, during the winter months only, would be the most feasible plan. In others a monthly or semi-monthly meeting during nine months of the year might seem the most desirable arrangement. Undoubtedly, in some cases the regular teachers'-meeting could be modified so as to provide for this special work.

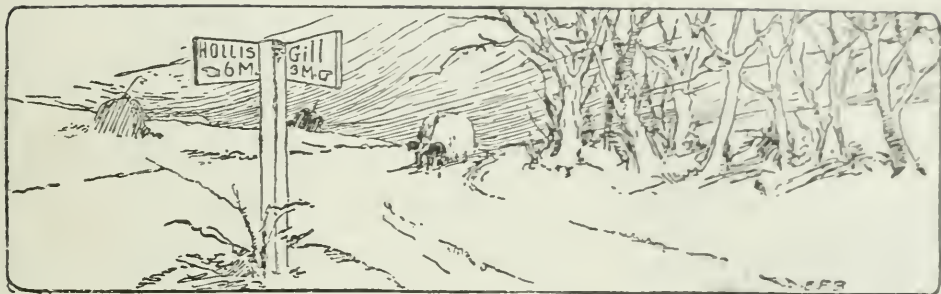
This course of study should include a series of lessons on the Bible, also lessons in regard to the work of the teacher in a general way, and in regard to the theory and practice in particular. There is no lack of material from which an earnest and sensible leader could easily arrange a series of very interesting and profitable lessons. It would be well sometimes to combine practice with instruction by calling upon the

members of the class to take the leadership or to present some portion of the lessons.

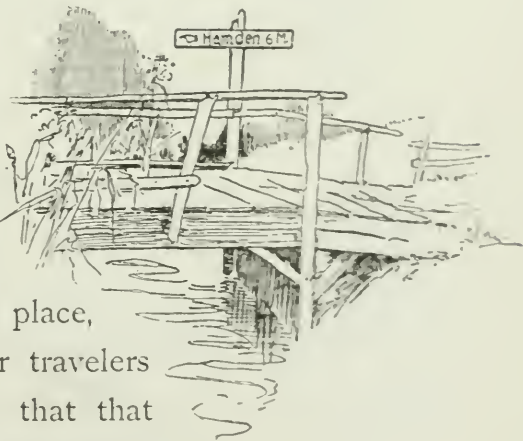
After a little, the members of such a class could be called upon to act as substitute teachers for a Sunday. After one or two seasons in such a course of study and training, the members of the class would be in a fair degree fitted for teaching, and would be ready to enter upon the work with such an appreciation of it and enthusiasm for it as would be a guarantee, in advance, of success. And such classes, perpetuated year after year in any parish, with new scholars coming in from time to time, would soon solve this long-standing and difficult problem, and inspire the superintendent with fresh courage, increase the membership of the school by building up the old classes and by the formation of new ones, and give to scholars more thorough instruction in the Word of God and in methods of Bible study. There is, perhaps, nothing which a pastor can do for his Sunday-school more important, and more promising in its results, than some such work. And if for any reason the pastor

cannot do this, surely he can find some one among the lay members of the church or in the community who can be secured for it.

In recognition of the urgency of the demand for trained teachers, and of the importance of providing for such training, the officers of some state Sunday-school associations employ competent persons who devote their time and attention to the organization of normal training classes in every community. These state workers have found that with a leader who believes in the work and is willing to devote himself to it, and with a few persons who are willing to study as a class, the work may be begun and carried forward successfully in any and every community where there is a Sunday-school and a demand for teachers. The fact that it has already been done in so many communities indicates the practicability of this method. And there is every reason why the general principle underlying this need of special training for special service should be recognized more generally than it is, among Sunday-schools everywhere.



The proposed census would also bring to light another fact, namely, that while guide-boards resemble each other in a general way and in many respects, yet each one has its own individuality, is adapted for a particular place, and would not be serviceable in a satisfactory way in some other place. No guide-board can do other than its own work to the best advantage. Each board is made to fill a special place, to do a special work for travelers who need just the help that that board can give them. Tall or short, pointing to the right or the left,—each guide-board is responsible for its duty-doing in the



place where it has been rightly stationed, and in that place only. What mischief it would make

if some one, maliciously or carelessly, should exchange the positions of some of the boards shown here and on the preceding page! It would not be long before a

traveler would have very

good cause to wonder at the stupidity or the evil intent of the one who was responsible for its position.

It might seem to be a simple

matter to make and

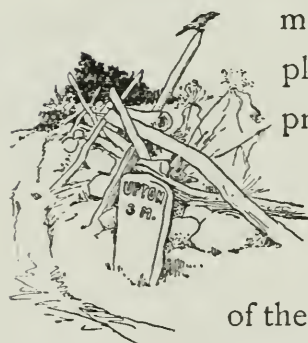
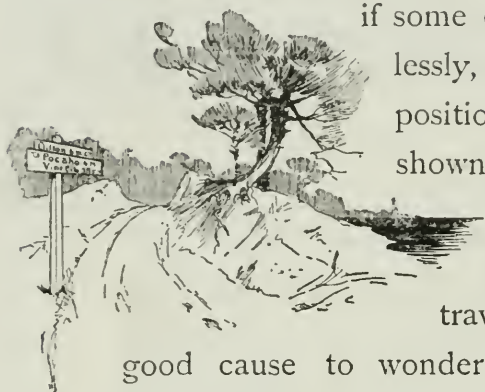
place any one of these guide-boards properly. And yet a moment's

thought will show what careful knowledge of a specific sort is necessary to this end. The name

of the destination beyond must be known ;

the exact distance between that point and

the spot on which the board is to be erected must



be carefully measured or estimated ; the board itself must be lettered and placed in such a position as to render impossible any uncertainty in the mind of the traveler who seeks the information it is intended to convey.

Yet occasionally the traveler comes across a misplaced guide-board. He is confused and annoyed, and is very likely to be quite indignant at the stupidity, carelessness, or maliciousness, of the person who placed the board in such a position. Such experiences, however, are not common. Usually great care is taken in the location of guide-boards, both as to the exact place or position and as to the proper direction.



There are some Sunday-school teachers who are unsuccessful in their work because they are misfits. They might do good work in some other class or department, but are not adapted to the position which they now occupy.

It may not always be possible to secure for each class just the right teacher, but it is certain that the exercise of skill and good judgment, by the superintendent, based on an intimate knowledge of classes and teachers, will result in placing every teacher, in due time, in the place where that teacher is best qualified to labor.

No superintendent will be likely to proceed far in the line of thoughtful and earnest effort for the accomplishment of this result without realizing the necessity of some plan for training persons for the position and work of Sunday-school teachers, in order that there may be an adequate supply of such teachers as are needed.

He may discover, if the school is ungraded, as most of our schools are, that many of those teachers who are out of place were not so when first appointed, but have become so in the natural course of events. It often is the case that a teacher who took charge of a class of boys or girls nine or ten years of age, and who was well qualified to teach children of that age, has continued as the teacher of that class until the

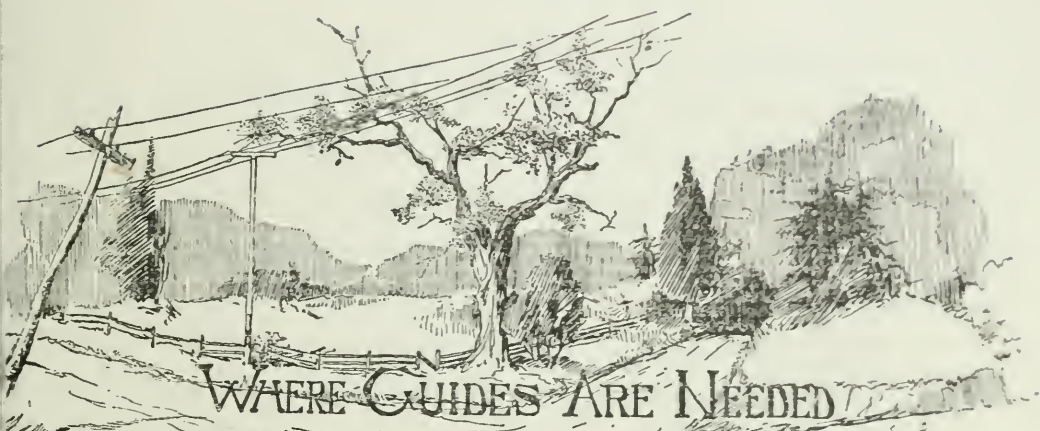
scholars are nineteen or twenty years old, and until the teacher, because of a lack of adaptation to the changed conditions and needs of the scholars, has become decidedly a misfit.

This is not necessarily a reflection upon the teacher. In public schools we do not consider it a reflection upon a teacher who is successful in the primary grade that she cannot teach successfully in the higher grades. Why should we expect in the Sunday-school that which would be unreasonable in the public school? There are, it is true, some few teachers in public schools and in Sunday-schools who can do successful work in any grade, and with any classes. But they are exceptions. And this is no reason for the custom which prevails in so many Sunday-schools of allowing teachers to continue in charge of the same class, or what remains of it, for several successive years.


It is true that many of our Sunday-schools cannot be thoroughly graded. But the fundamental principles of the graded system in the promotion of classes and the retention of teachers

in particular grades or departments, may be successfully applied in the conduct of many schools. Indeed, those principles have already been applied, and are in operation in most schools, so far as pertains to the primary department. Classes are regularly promoted from that department to the next higher, but the teachers, instead of going on with the classes to another department, remain in the primary room, and successive classes of children share in the benefits of their instruction and influence. All that is needed, then, is to extend this plan to other departments of the school. Teachers in the primary department who were well adapted to the work when first chosen rarely become misfits by continuing in that work for successive years. There is no good reason why teachers in the higher departments should become, as so many of them do, like misplaced and useless guide-boards, because of failure to apply to those departments the principles that are recognized as essential in the primary grade.

WHERE GUIDES ARE NEEDED



WHERE GUIDES ARE NEEDED

VARIOUS phases of the Sunday-school teacher's work have been considered in the preceding chapters, and have been illustrated in a fair degree by guide-boards in different positions and conditions.

Our attention now is called to a lonely scene in nature. Several roads appear, but no guide-board is in sight. In such a place as this, even a part of a post, or a fragment of a board, might be something of a comfort to the traveler, even though it afforded him no information.

The utter absence of a guide-board in such a place, where one is evidently greatly needed, may suggest in a very forcible way the condition

and needs of those children and youth who are not in the Sunday-school. There are multitudes of children in our land who have entered upon the journey of life without a spiritual teacher or guide of any sort, who are in unchristian homes, if indeed they have any homes ; who have not been reached by the church through any of its varied instrumentalities, and who are almost as ignorant concerning the Bible, and concerning Jesus Christ the Saviour, whom the Bible reveals, as though living in the heart of the dark continent. And there are greater multitudes whose ignorance concerning spiritual things is not, perhaps, as great as this, yet who are not under the direct influence of the church and of the Word of God.

These children and youth are to be found in all parts of our land ; some of them live in every community. They have been found repeatedly in our most thoroughly christianized towns and villages. In such localities they are generally scattered about, here one and there another, and yet the writer has frequently found groups of

from six to forty or fifty children of this class in a single neighborhood.

Such travelers on life's highway have great need of guide-boards. It is the imperative duty and the precious privilege of the church of Christ to supply this need.

They do not seek the church, and probably will not if left to themselves. The church must seek them; and in the accomplishment of this work the Sunday-school will be found a most effective agency. It has been said, "The Sunday-school ought to be the church aroused to work for the ingathering of the outsiders from highways and byways, lanes and hedges; it ought to be the body of disciples coming into contact with the neglected, and even with the outcast classes."

Many of these may, with proper effort, be brought into the Sunday-school, and placed under the care and instruction of loving, faithful teachers.

Some of them can best be reached by the organization of a Sunday-school for their benefit

in their own neighborhood. Others, in localities where the organization of a Sunday-school does not seem to be wise or feasible, may be gathered in little groups or classes under the care of earnest, devoted Christian workers who are willing to spend an hour or two during part of the Lord's Day in work of this kind for the Master. Many such classes are in existence. Thousands more might be gathered if only Christian men and women, imbued with the spirit of Him who, in spite of weariness and hunger, delighted to teach a single soul at Jacob's well, would say gladly, "Here am I, send me, send me!"

The call is for teachers, better teachers and more teachers, in order that a greater number of the precious youth of our land may be instructed, guided, and saved.

No work is more important. None bears more directly and positively upon the welfare and perpetuity of the state and the nation. None has greater significance in relation to the growth and prosperity of the church of Christ. No work yields richer or more abundant results.

A generation ago a Christian man endeavored to teach and guide a class of seven noisy and mischievous boys, gathered in a little old-fashioned schoolhouse on one of the hillsides of Vermont. It was hard work. His patience was tried, his faith was severely tested. When God called him home, he may have had no consciousness of having accomplished much for the class. But the results of the self-sacrificing, humble labors of that godly man were told afterward in the following bit of verse written by one of those boys, now a successful minister of the gospel :

“I wonder if he remembers,
That ‘good old man’ in heaven,
The class in the Old Red Schoolhouse,
Known as the ‘Noisy Seven’ ?

“I wonder if he remembers
How restless we used to be,
Or thinks we forgot the lessons
Of Christ and Gethsemane ?

“That voice, so touchingly tender,
Comes down to me through the years,
With a pathos which seemed to mingle
His own with the Saviour’s tears.

"I often wish I could tell him,
Though we caused him so much pain
By our thoughtless, boyish frolic,
His lessons were not in vain.

"I'd like to tell him how Harry,
The merriest one of all,
From the bloody field of Shiloh
Went home at the Master's call.

"I'd like to tell him how Stephen,
So brimming with mirth and fun,
Now tells the heathen of China
The tale of the Crucified One.

"I'd like to tell him how Joseph,
And Philip and Jack and Ray,
Are honored among the churches,
The foremost men of the day.

"I'd like, yes, I'd like to tell him,
What his lessons did for me,
And how I'm trying to follow
That Christ of Gethsemane.

"How many beside, I know not,
Will gather at last in heaven,
The fruit of that faithful sowing ;
But the sheaves are surely seven."

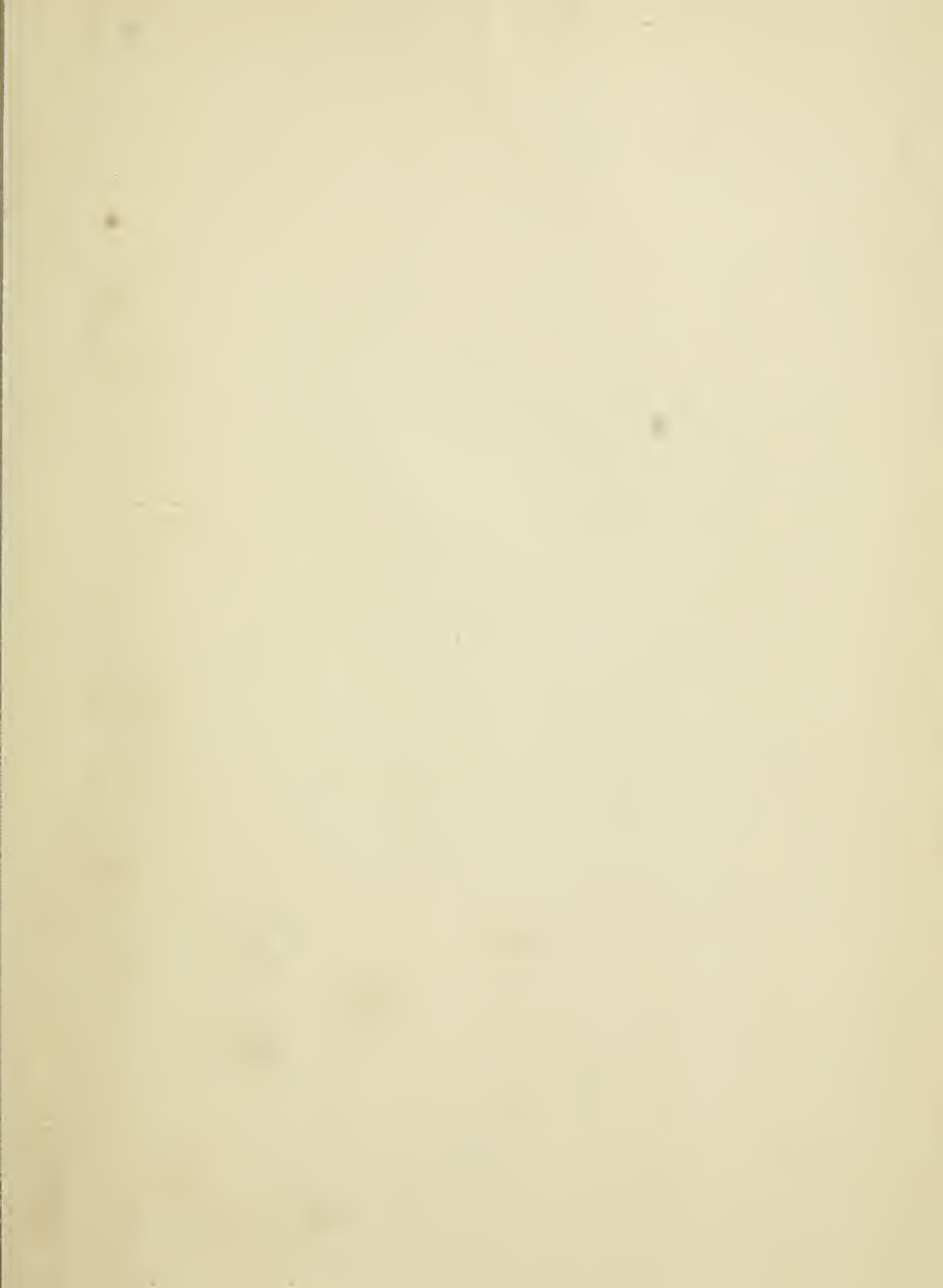
Not far from fifty years ago, in a little settlement on the western frontier where a neighbor-

hood Sunday-school had been established, some one was interested in placing a guide-board in the pathway of a young girl living in that community, by bringing her into the Sunday-school. That girl soon brought in her father, Stephen Paxson, an ungodly man. In that Sunday-school he was led to give his heart to Jesus Christ, and his life to the service of his Saviour. He became a Sunday-school missionary, and labored for years with untiring zeal, organizing Sunday-schools in the new settlements of the Mississippi Valley. The story of his life and work has been written, and is of thrilling interest to every Christian heart. He organized over thirteen hundred Sunday-schools, with a membership of over eighty thousand souls. Over his grave, in a beautiful spot in the St. Louis Cemetery, the Sunday-school scholars of Illinois and Missouri have erected a granite monument, and upon it are inscribed these words of Holy Writ : "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

May the Lord graciously write these words upon the hearts of all Sunday-school teachers, and upon the hearts of all Christians who may, if they will, become teachers and guides to those who, without the light of the gospel, might perish !

“They that be wise [or teachers] shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”







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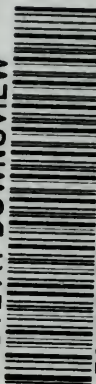
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